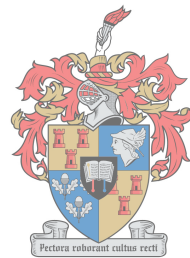


**Constitution or Church Order?**  
**A church judicial analysis of the church documents in**  
**the Reformed Church of East Africa**

**By**

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### **Declaration**

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## ABSTRACT

The Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1944. The RCEA however deviates in its church governance from Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles ordinarily embraced by Reformed churches across the globe. The church judicial development of the *RCEA* has been influenced on the one hand by the mission agencies for example the Dutch Reformed missionaries as well as the Reformed Mission League and on the other hand by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). The researcher assessed the *Constitution of the RCEA* in this dissertation against the Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles (see Chapter 3 and 5). The research tries to determine to what extent the *Constitution of the RCEA* is grounded in reformed church polity principles, namely:

- a) Self-government under the sole headship of Christ,
- b) The limited autonomy of the local congregation,
- c) The denominational ties serve the well-being of the Church,
- d) The restricted power and responsibilities of ecclesial assemblies,
- e) The necessity and nature of Christian discipline,
- f) Right of appeal,
- g) The power of the major assemblies with regard to misconduct.

Three phases of the church judicial developments of the RCEA can be discern, namely

- i. Dependency to “mother church” 1905-1963,
- ii. RCEA as semi-autonomous church 1963-1991,
- iii. RCEA move towards self-governance 1982-1992.

The researcher proposes in the dissertation amendments based on Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles, as well as provision being made of in reformed church orders from different contexts *inter alia* the *Church Order of Dordt* (1619), the church order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), the church order of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) as well as the church order of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) which the RCEA might take into account when the denomination embark on the drafting of a new church order.

The researcher concluded at the end of the dissertation that the RCEA should make provisions in the envisaged church order regarding: The ordination of women, The authority and responsibilities of the ecclesial assemblies, The confessional basis of the RCEA, The necessity and nature of Christian discipline and the right to appeal.

## OPSOMMING

Gedurende 1944 het die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk die Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) gestig. Kerkregtelik wyk die RCEA van die Gereformeerde / Presbiteriaanse kerkregbeginsels af wat gewoonlik met Gereformeerde kerke dwarsdeur die wêreld geassosieer word. Die kerkgeregtelike ontwikkeling van die RCEA word aan die een kant deur die sendelinge van die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk asook die Gereformeerde Sendingbond beïnvloed en aan die anderkant word dit deur die Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) beïnvloed. Die *Grondwet van die RCEA* word in hierdie verhandeling teen die beginsels van Gereformeerde / Presbiteriaanse kerkreg geëvalueer (vergelyk hoofstukke 3 en 5). Die navorsing poog vas te stel in welke mate die *Grondwet van die RCEA* op die volgende gereformeerde kerkregtelike beginsels geskoei is al dan nie, naamlik:

- a) Selfregering onder die hoofskap van Christus,
- b) Die beperkte outonomie van die plaaslike gemeente,
- c) Die kerkverband dien die welsyn van die Kerk,
- d) Die beperkte gesag en verantwoordelikhede van kerklike gemeentes,
- e) Die noodsaaklikheid en aard van Christelike dissipline,
- f) Die appèlreg,
- g) Die mag van die meerdere vergaderings met betrekking tot wangedrag.

Die kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die RCEA kan in drie fases onderskei word, naamlik

- a) Die afhanklikheid aan "moederkerk" 1905-1963,
- b) Die RCEA as semi-outonome kerk 1963-1991,
- c) Op weg na selfbestuur 1982-1992.

Die navorser maak in die verhandeling voorstelle, geskoei op Gereformeerde kerkregbeginsels asook op kerkordes van gereformeerde kerke uit verskillende kontekste onder andere die kerkorde van Dordt (1619), die kerkorde van die Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN), die kerkorde van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika (VGKSA) asook die kerkorde van die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), wat die RCEA in ag kan neem wanneer die denominasie hul nuwe kerkorde opstel.

Die navorser konkludeer aan die einde van die dissertasie dat die RCEA behoort in die beoogde kerkorde voorsiening te maak vir bepalinge wat betrekking het op: Die ordening van vroue, Die gesag en verantwoordelikhede van gemeentes, Die belydenisbasis van die RCEA, Die noodsaaklikheid en aard van Christelike dissipline en die reg om te appelleer.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved, devoted and departed parents, my wife Maculater Jebiwot Kipkoech, who encouraged me throughout the years of my study, and to our children, Adolem and Abong. Though not endowed with much wealth on earth my parents struggled to educate their children. To them education was as precious as gold. Unfortunately, their demise occurred before they reaped the fruits of their labor. To them I say, “Thank you and may your souls rest in peace.”

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i>
ACB	African Brotherhood Church
AIM	African Inland Mission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CPCEA	Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
FRCA	Free Reformed Church in Australia
GZB	Gereformeerde Zending Bond
IBEAC	Imperial British East Africa Company
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
PKN	Protestant Church in the Netherlands
RCA	Reformed Church in America
RCEA	Reformed Church of East Africa
RITT	Reformed Institute for Theological Training
RML	Reformed Mission League
URCSA	Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

#### 1.1 Introduction

As a lecturer at the Reformed Institute for Theological training, the researcher was prompted by the question whether the Reformed Church in East Africa (RCEA) adheres to a Reformed or a Presbyterian church governance system. Historically the RCEA considers and understands itself as a reformed church, but in praxis it deviates from principles ordinarily equates with Reformed church polity.

The Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) is the result of the missionary endeavours during the turn of the century of the white farmers living in Kenya, who were members of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC). The farmers carried out mission work amongst the indigenous workers on their farms. The primary goal of these mission endeavours were not to constitute an indigenous church. It was rather an effort to share the gospel with the indigenous people. Around 1906 to 1932 the DRC Synod in Transvaal decided to establish the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission in Kenya in order to organize the mission work done by these farmers. This led to the calling of the Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers in 1944 as the first missionary of the DRC in Kenya. Henceforth, the intent and purpose of the work changed from an informal mission work to church planting and ultimately to the establishment of an indigenous reformed church in Kenya. The Bwana Loubser Sending Mission missionary activities included amongst others evangelism, training of ministers of the Word, establishment of schools as well as attending to the medical needs of the indigenous people. With independence looming during the 1960's, the Afrikaners farmers left Kenya in a hurry. This paved the way during 1963 for a handover of all work done under the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission to the Reformed Mission League (RML)<sup>1</sup> also known as the Gereformeerde Zending Bond) (GZB).

The Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) was established in 1963, the same year that Kenya attained its independence from Britain. The independent Kenyan state however required each

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformed Mission League, founded in 1901, is a church-based mission organization within the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN). The PKN is the continuation of three former churches: the Netherlands Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands which merged in 2004.

church to register as an organization. In order to register as an organization the RCEA needed a constitution. The RCEA functioned from its conception without a constitution or a church order.

## **1.2. Historical background to Reformed church orders**

The RCEA therefore, without attending to Reformed church principles or to the structure of the historic church orders for example Calvin's *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques*, the *Church Order of Dordt* or even the *Dutch Reformed Church Order*, adopted during 1963 the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa* (PCEA) as form of governance. This adoption of a constitution marked the birth of RCEA as an independent reformed church in Kenya. Calvin's church polity and the *Church Order of Dordt 1619* played a huge role in the church polity developments of Protestant churches across the globe, Calvin was appointed in 1541 together with three of the syndics of Geneva to draw up a new code of laws for Geneva (Johnson, 1900:48). They drafted the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* of 1541, which was finally approved on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1542. The distinctive principles of this system of government were:

- a) The self-government of the church under the headship of Christ.
- b) Ecclesiastical discipline of all the members of the church from the greatest to the smallest to be exercised by a parliamentary court consisting of ministers of the gospel and ruling elders.
- c) A consistory, or parliamentary court, consisting of elders of two classes, to exercise this discipline.
- d) The recognition and reinstitution of the New Testament ruling eldership (Johnson, 1900:48).

Calvin distinguished sharply between church and state. According to Calvin the church and state were independent of one another (Johnson, 1900:50). He believed that God in Christ is head of both church and state. Calvin valued discipline as second only to teaching (Johnson, 1900: 51) According to Calvin "no society and even no house, though containing only a small family, can be preserved in a proper state without discipline, this is far more necessary in the church, the state of which ought to be the most orderly of all. . . Discipline forms the ligaments which connect the members together and keep each in its proper place. . . Discipline, therefore, serves as a bridle to curb and restrain the refractory who resist the doctrine of Christ, or as a spur to stimulate the



inactive, and sometimes as a father's rod with which those who have grievously fallen may be chastised in mercy and with the gentleness of the spirit of Christ.” (*Institutes Book IV* Chapter xii.).

The *Church Order of Dordt 1619* (Addendum 3) was adopted on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1619 at the end of the National Synod which took place in the city of Dordrecht in the Netherlands in 1618–1619. The synod commenced on 13 November 1618 and lasted for almost six months. The Synod of Dordt was held in order to settle a controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of Arminianism. The decision of the Synod of Dordt on the five main points of doctrine in dispute in the Netherlands is popularly known as the *Canons of Dordt* (Addendum 2). The *Canons of Dordt* are statements of doctrine on unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of saints. Although the *Canons of Dordt* forms part of the confessional basis of most Reformed churches globally for example Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC), Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), Free Reformed Church in Australia (FRCA) et cetera, it is not included in the confessional basis of the RCEA.

The *Church Order of Dordt* influenced the church judicial development of numerous Reformed churches across the globe for example the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, Reformed Church in America, Canadian Reformed Churches, Christian Reformed Church in North America, Free Reformed Church in Australia, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa et cetera.

The *Church Order of Dordt* consists of 84 articles subdivided under four headings namely:

- a) Concerning the offices (articles 1-28),
- b) Concerning ecclesiastical assemblies (articles 30-52),
- c) Concerning doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies (articles 53-70),
- d) Concerning censure and ecclesiastical admonitions (articles 71-84 (*Church Order of Dordt 1619*; see Addendum 3)).

The RCEA ignored this rich Reformed heritage with the adoption of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa*. Coertzen (2012:87) quoting Willie Jonker (1959:795) points out that the *DRC Church Order* was closely linked to the *Church Order of Dordt*. He writes, “The *Church Order of Dordt* is without doubt the best and purest historical formulation and summary of the Scriptural principles on which Reformed Church government rests in spite of a few articles which could be formulated in another way, due to the changes in time” (Jonker, 1959:796). He continues to say that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) never lost the spirit and main principles of the *Church Order of Dordt* (Jonker, 1959:796). The Dutch Reformed Church’s order tried to stay as closely as possible to Dordt in its different chapters and sometimes even in the way in which articles are formulated (Jonker, 1959:796). The missionaries of the DRC, who work amongst the indigenous people in Kenya, did not introduce a church order based on the principles of the *Church Order of Dordt* to the RCEA. The researcher compares the aforementioned reformed church orders with the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* and proposes amendments at the end of the dissertation to the RCEA, which they may take, into account when they embark on the drafting of a church order for the RCEA.

### **1.3. Church polity and ecclesiology**

There is a link between ecclesiology and church polity. Church orders are structured in legal articles, which translate the ecclesiology of a church. Dingemans presupposition is that the structure of the church is largely determined by whether the foundation of the church order is Christological or Pneumatological (1992:223). An Christological ecclesiology gives the church a direct Christological structure, while the Bible presupposes that Christ remains the Head of his congregation. In a Pneumatological ecclesiology the church is seen as a creation of the Spirit. The church is not only the Body of Christ to the world (1992:224). A Pneumatological church order offers more room for pluralism, to culturally determined structures on equality of parishioners, non-hierarchical forms of governance and the priesthood of all believers. Christ is the only Lord of the Church and all believers are equal. No one has more power than the other does.

According to Hanko (1962:5-9) the concept church polity was first used by Wilhelmus Zepperus, who called this science *Politiae Ecclesiae* (1595). Zepperus was the first Protestant theologian who made a special study of church government. Gysbertus Voetius used the concept in a slightly

altered form: *Politica Ecclesiastica* (1962:5-9). The concept polity is derived from the Latin *politia*. This word means, Pertaining to the state or commonwealth; Administration of civil affairs; Citizenship with its rights, privileges, and obligations (Hanko, 1962:5-9). Bakker (1992:14) asserts that the concept 'polity' usually refers to the rules and regulations that churches seek in order to regulate its organization and operations, as well as its relationship to the outside as well as how the church should organize her life and work. Church law is rooted in the ecclesiology and the doctrine of the church. Church law covers only the visible church (Bakker, 1992:15). The invisible side of the church is not subjected to a specific legal arrangement. The rules and laws that apply to other human societies cannot simply judge the church in its visible form. The church has a specific nature (*sui generis*), namely the church is a Christian community of faith in its own right (*sui iuris*). Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) mentions, according to Bakker (1992:16), in his *Politica Ecclesiastica* that church polity is the sacred science of the reign of the visible church (*scientia sacra regendi ecclesiam visibilem*).

According to Hanko, (1962:5) church polity is the science of church governance. Church polity consists of two sub-branches namely kybernetics and the rules and regulations of a denomination. Kybernetics derives from the Greek word *kuberna'n* (to rule) (Hanko, 1962:5). Kybernetics refers to the application of the rules of a denomination practically (Bakker, 1992:17). Kybernetics deals specifically with the principles of church government. The other branch deals with the rules and regulations of a denomination. In defining the term "polity" Bakker, says that one has to think of the rules and regulations that churches seek to use to regulate its organization and operations, as well as its relationship to the outside world (1992:13). The concept also refers to the science that deals with the study of canon law. The church is not only concerned with how it is governed, but also and above all, how it should be governed. Church polity therefore goes beyond the internal organisation of her life to the relationship with the outside world and society. It also refers to the nature of the church and its work, and calling in the world.

The Church is declared the communion of saints in the *Apostles Creed*. The Church according to Hodge (1879:5) is not a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. The conception of the Church as the communion of saints does not include the idea of any external organization. The bond of union may be spiritual (Hodge, 1879:5). The Church is described as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22;

4: 15, 16; Col. 2. 18; Hodge, 1879:15). The Church is declared the temple of God, because God dwells in it by his Spirit (1 Pet. 2: 4-5; Hodge, 1879:16). The Church is the family of God (Rom. 8:16-17). The Church is the flock of Christ and its members are his sheep (John 10). The Church is the bride of Christ (Eph. v. 25-30) (Hodge 1879:17). The Church is defined to be a company of believers, the *coetus fidelium* according to Hodge (1879: 17).

Unity is an essential attribute of the church. The unity of the Church is threefold. (a) Spiritual: the unity of faith and of communion; (b) Comprehensive: the Church is one as it is catholic, embracing all the people of God; (c) Historical: it is the same Church through all ages (Hodge, 1879:22). According to Dr Miroslav Volf, Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School, “this represents, on the one hand, a restricted point of inquiry, since it overlooks much of the rich life and multifaceted mission of the church; our interest is directed not toward how the church ought to live in the world according to God’s will nor how it can live successfully in the power of the spirit, but rather toward the *sine quo* of what it means for the church to call itself a church in the first place.” (Volf, 1998:127).

The word ‘Church’ (in the original Greek of the New Testament, *ecclesia*) means ‘a congregation’, or ‘assembly’; and the character of the assembly, to which it is applied, is to be ascertained by the use of the term in each particular instance. The church is composed of people called out by God to be His chosen and peculiar people (Beets, 1929:236). According to Coertzen (2004:82), the church is all those people, who accept God’s rule in Christ and who, through the Holy Spirit, are the fellowship of the elect and are saved and who share in the blessing of the Kingdom. The church is the work of Triune God and has very important implications for the government and the wellness of the church. The church is a unique community of people who have gathered into a unity through the proclamation of the Gospel (Coertzen, 2004:83).

Hodge summarises what a church is in his opinion as follows: “So far, therefore, is the Apostles’ Creed from representing the Church as a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy; so far is it from setting forth the Church as a visible society of one specific form, that it does not present it under the idea of an external society at all. The saints may exist, they may have communion, the

Church may continue under any external organization, or without any visible organization whatever.” (1879: 6).

The *Belgic Confession* states:

We believe that we ought, diligently and circumspectly, to discern from the Word of God which is the true church. But we speak not here of hypocrites, who are mixed in the church with the good, yet are not of the church, though externally in it, but we say that the body and communion of the true church must be distinguished from all sect, who call themselves church. The marks by which the true church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin (*Belgic Confession* Article 27; see Addendum 1).

The marks of the true church are identified as the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments according to the Lord’s institution and the proper administration of discipline in the church. Bakker (1992:14) furthermore argues that one can speak about the church in more than one way. First, in its concrete form it is a community of people, a human cohabitation, which is somewhat similar to other human societies, such as the state, marriage etc. Secondly in its essence it is, however, a spiritual communion, the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church of the Apostles does not coincide with or is in one or more of the existing ecclesiastical institutions. The church is established and maintained by God (Janssen, 2000:2). The church is the result of the activity and work of God and therefore it is expressed and maintained in light of the revelation of God in Scripture.

#### **1.4.Constitution and Church Order**

Pieter Coertzen makes in his book *Church and Order, A Reformed Perspective* a distinction between order in the church and order for the church. After that, he proceeds to lay out the grounds in which a church order is to be formulated. Coertzen premise is that church law is distinct from other laws because it seeks to fulfil the will of Christ for His Church. The distinctiveness of church law is that it must also derive from the Bible what entails Christ’s will for His church and then implement it for contemporary times (Coertzen, 1998:7).

A constitution is a legal document that gives a denomination direction in ministry and protection from lawsuits. In a church order or constitution churches exercise their right to incorporate, own property, hire staff, pay some kinds of taxes and be exempt from others, and run other ministries that may or may not be similarly tax exempt or have a different level of legal protection than the church. According to Meeter, a reformed church constitution will have the following as its most common and important parts: The Ecumenical Creeds, namely the Nicene Creed, Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed as well as the Creed, Reformed confessions, namely the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dordt. According to Meeter a constitution of an denomination should make provision for the Liturgy, the Government, Disciplinary Procedures, and Formularies (1993:1). Meeter argues that the church as legal entity needs a constitution (1993:12).

A good church order, according to Rongen, is based on God's Word and is essential for the bond of churches (2005:9-10). According Coertzen, since the church is a voluntary organization, then a church order can be regarded as the contract upon which this voluntary association is based upon. He argues further that the unique character of a church and its law as well as the practical use and application of its church order indicates that a church order is not merely the result of contracting parties' mutual desires and labor (Coertzen 2004:188-189). His premises is that a church order should also be understood as a spiritual issue and not merely a contract. It is a spiritual ordinance that has the objective of ensuring that the Word of God is preserved purely, the sacraments are not desecrated and those assigned to teach the congregation are called lawfully and appropriately and that those who listen will make it active through good and holy way of life. This must in the end lead to glorification of God, promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ, his Son and his church built and being freed of all offense (Coertzen, 2004:188-189).

### **1.5 Motivation and problem statement**

The RCEA is a Reformed church. However, it deviates in its church governance from Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles ordinarily being embraced by Reformed churches across the globe. The mission agencies for example the Dutch Reformed missionaries as well as the Reformed Mission League and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) played a pivotal role in the church judicial development of the RCEA. In this dissertation, the *Constitution*

*of the RCEA* will be assessed against the principles of Reformed/Presbyterian church polity. The premise of the researcher is that the reformed polity principles should be given prominence in the the training of ministers of the Word of the RCEA and the drafting of the church order of the RCEA. According to Van Oene Reformed church polity stresses and upholds the autonomy of the local churches while, at the same time, maintains and impress “upon the churches their mutual obligation to practice the bond in the unity of the true faith.” (Van Oene, 1990:1).

Reformed church polity is not part of the curriculum for the training of ministers of the Word of the RCEA at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training<sup>2</sup> or at the St. Paul’s United Theological College in Lemur, an ecumenical college managed jointly by Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (Van Zyl, 2001:202). Members of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, Methodist in Kenya and the Reformed Church in East Africa received theological training at the St Paul’s United Theological College. Ecumenism is given priority in the curriculum at St Paul’s United Theological College (Van Zyl, 2001:202). This lack of training in church reformed polity at St Paul’s United Theological College and Reformed Institute for Theological Training led to a vacuum in the understanding of Reformed church polity in the RCEA and constricted the church judicial development of the RCEA. Thus far, there is a lack of church judicial research executed on the RCEA. Studies done on RCEA include the following:

- a) In 1983, Peter Bisem conducted at the Makerere University in Kampala, as part of a diploma in theology research on the history of RCEA. The title of his research paper is *A historical account of Kimarer (Kerio-Valley) Parish of the Reformed Church of East Africa 1971-1981*) He mentioned nothing in his research regarding church polity development of RCEA.
- b) Evert van den Ham (1992), a missionary of the Reformed Mission League, did research on growth and the present identity of RCEA as a possible cause for stagnating growth. He discusses at length the *Growth and Identity* of RCEA as a possible cause for stagnating growth, but largely ignores church polity as an identity marker.
- c) Thomas Togom (1999) devoted in his PhD dissertation, entitled, *A Curriculum for the Lay*

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<sup>2</sup> Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT) was founded in 1969 by the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) to provide theological training to evangelists who were to play a leading role in the ministry of RCEA. Currently it trains church workers, evangelists and theology students.



*and Adult Training in RCEA*, a whole chapter on the history of the RCEA. He mentions in two pages the importance of church polity for the adult Christian education in the RCEA.

- d) Kobus Van Zyl (2001) doctoral thesis, *the impact of Reformed Missions on the Origin, Growth and Identity of the Reformed Church of East Africa*, highlights the need for research to be undertaken in the area of Reformed church polity (c.f. Van Zyl, 2001:303). The dissertation entails an extensive historical research about the RCEA, but also displays clearly the lack of church polity development since the constitution of the RCEA.

Seeing that a church judicial study of the church polity development of the RCEA had not been undertaken before, the researcher decided to evaluate the *Constitution of the RCEA* in the light of Reformed church polity principles (see Addendum 5; Mugambi & Kuschener-Pelkmam, 2004:128). The premise of the researcher is that not the church as an institution but the kingdom of God should be the starting point for church governance. Therefore a church order should not be seen as the essence of the church. Rather a church order is about the wellbeing of a church. A church order seeks to promote better church governance. The ecclesiastical laws are intended to promote the wellbeing of the Christian church.

Although the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) understands itself to be a Reformed Church, the denomination at large does not adhere the reformed church polity principles. There are several ways in which this problem became apparent *inter alia* signs of episcopalism, hierarchy, power struggle between the general secretary and the moderator, centralization of power and ecclesiastical authority into the hands of a few ministers of the Word of the RCEA, the confusion about the relationship between local congregations and the major assemblies, the power of the major assemblies, the discipline of the Christ exercises His authority in the Church through the offices. These officer bearers of the Church have no absolute or independent, but only a derived and ministerial power. The hypothesis of the research is as follows: *A church order is ecclesiology translated into law. The RCEA should therefore take account of both the ecclesiology and the Reformed church polity principles in the drafting of their envisaged church order.*

Church polity concepts used in this dissertation include amongst others the following: offices, ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, evangelists, moderator, major assemblies, minor



assemblies, ecclesiastical assemblies, sessions, church council, classis, presbytery, particular synod, constitution, church order, church discipline, appeal, the autonomy of the local church, the character of the denomination, the authority of the major assemblies, the proviso to appeal et cetera.

## 1.6 Research Questions

The title of this research is *Constitution or Church Order? A church judicial analysis of the church documents in the Reformed Church of East Africa*. Churches use different concepts to refer to the general ecclesiastical constitution of a denomination for example Church Order, Constitution, Church Law, Canon Law, Church Ordinance (German: *Kirchenordnung*, French: *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*), Book of Order, Book of Common Order, Book of Discipline or Form of Government. In line with the Presbyterian Church in East Africa (PCEA), the RCEA opt to use the concept constitution in order to refer to the general ecclesiastical constitution of the denomination. The question in this research is, “Shouldn’t the RCEA as reformed church rather use in line with the historic church orders for example the *Church Order of Dort* and other denomination in the Calvinistic tradition the concept church order instead of constitution?” The main research question is therefore: In what ways does the constitution of the Reformed Church of East Africa qualify it to be a reformed church? The sub questions are as follows:

### Sub questions:

- a) What does the historical background of the PCEA and the RCEA conveyed regarding their church judicial development? To what extent does the church judicial development of the PCEA influence that of the RCEA?
- b) To what extent is, the *Constitution of the RCEA* grounded in reformed church polity principles? What is being understood under Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles? How should these principles be take into account in the drafting of the RCEA envisaged church order?
- c) What amendments should be taken into account with the drafting of a church order for the RCEA?

## 1.7 Methodology

This study will employ a church judicial research of both primary and secondary sources of the RCEA for example acts, minutes and will juxtapose it with different church order *inter alia* *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* (1541), *Church Order of Dordt* (1619), Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), Free Reformed Church in Australia (FRCA), Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN), Reformed Church in Australia (RCA), the URCSA and the DRC.

The researcher paid attention to primary sources in the research namely the *Constitution of the RCEA* 1963 and 1992 as well as the annual Synod resolutions on related matters in particular those kept at the archives of the RCEA and at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT) in Eldoret, *inter alia* minute of the RCEA synods, RCEA annual reports, parish reports, departmental reports, resolutions of RCEA meetings and the church publications, *Sauti ya Vijana* and the *Tuzungumza*. The researcher translated primary sources from Swahili to English.

## 1.8 Delimitation of study

The lack of church polity research in the RCEA restricted the church judicial development of the RCEA. This research is limited to a study of the church judicial development of the RCEA from 1944 to the present. Only a few books on Reformed church polity are available in Reformed Institute for Theological Training or at the St Paul's United Theological College. The researcher therefore made extensive use of books available at the University of Stellenbosch Theology Library as well as books borrowed from the promotor's private library.

One of the major obstacles, which the researcher encountered, was that most church polity books as well as the primary sources of the RCEA, namely minutes and reports of the missionaries, are written in either Dutch, German or Afrikaans. However, the researcher found the digitalized library on [www.kerkrecht.nl](http://www.kerkrecht.nl) as a huge asset for everyone doing research on church polity. The website gives to church judicial documents and historical documents from the Reformed tradition of Protestantism *inter alia* church orders, commentaries, acts of councils and synods from past centuries of the Reformed Churches especially in the Netherlands. Besides numerous documents in Dutch, German and Afrikaans church polity documents in English are also available on the website.

Lastly, the lack of interest of the colleagues in the RCEA on the research topic hampered the research project largely. Not much assistance had been rendered to the researcher in this regard.

### 1.9 Value of the study

This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding in the RCEA of the reformed church polity principles that will be foundational for the drafting of the envisaged church order of the RCEA. It is envisaged that this dissertation will be used in the training RCEA theological students, further theological training of the ministers of the Word as well as the training of evangelists, elders, deacons and members of the RCEA. It is also hoped that this study will invigorate interest in church polity studies in Kenya and Africa at large. Finally, it is hoped that this study will quicken further research in church polity and will ultimately lead to the writing of a manual on the envisaged church order for the RCEA and other publications regarding the practice of church polity in the RCEA.

### 1.10 Structure of Dissertation

**Chapter One:** The problem, the hypothesis and methodology are being introduced in this chapter. The main problem in this dissertation is to ascertain to what extent the *Constitution of the RCEA* is based on reformed church polity principles.

**Chapter Two** In this chapter attention is being given to the five church governance systems as well as the principles of Reformed/Presbyterian church polity, namely the Episcopal system (Roman or Papal system), Lutheran/ Territorial system, Reformed/Presbyterian system, Independent or Congregational system and the Collegial system of church governance. The chapter also attends to a discussion on the ecclesiological and theological foundations of Reformed/Presbyterian church orders.

**Chapter Three** The *Constitution of the PCEA*, adopted in 1956, played a huge role in the constitutional development of the RCEA. A short overview of the constitutional development of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa is being given in this chapter.

**Chapter Four** This chapter analyses the historical background of the RCEA. In this chapter, emphasis is being laid on the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya from 1904 to 1961. The reformed foundations of the RCEA were laid during this period. In this chapter, attention is being given to the church judicial development of the RCEA.

**Chapter Five** This chapter gives attention to the church judicial development of the RCEA. Three phases of the church judicial developments of the RCEA can be discern, namely

- a) The RCEA dependency to “mother church” 1905-1963
- b) The RCEA as semi-autonomous church 1963-1991
- c) The RCEA repositions towards self-governance 1982-1992.

The decisions made by the Synods of the RCEA in order to revise or amend the articles of the *Constitution of 1963* that had significant bearing on the governance of the RCEA. The aim of this chapter is to trace the church judicial development of the RCEA from 1905-1992. In this chapter cognisance will also be taken of the historic church orders *inter alia Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques (1541)* and the *Church Order of Dordt (1619)*.

**Chapter Six:** In this chapter the researcher compares the reformed church orders *inter alia*, *Church Order of Dordt (1619)*, Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), Reformed Church in America, the URCSA and the DRC with the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992*. The researcher also proposes amendments, which the RCEA may take in to account when they embark on the drafting of a church order for the RCEA.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PRINCIPLES OF REFORMED/ PROTESTANT POLITY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter classifies the historic church governance systems as well as Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles. These church polity systems are ideal-typical and ecclesial variations are possible within one church polity system. This chapter is divided in four sections. Firstly, attention is given to the church governance systems, followed by discussion on the historic church orders, the Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles and finally on the ecclesiological and theological foundations of Reformed/Presbyterian church orders. One should however keep in mind that church governance systems are multifaceted. In most cases, churches borrow from different church governance systems in order to create their church orders.

#### 2.2 Historical overview of church governance

Clarence Bouwman<sup>3</sup> (2000:25) and Herman Hanko,<sup>4</sup> asserts that there are basically five church governance systems, *inter alia* the Episcopal system (Roman or Papal system), Lutheran/Territorial system, Reformed/Presbyterian system, Independent or Congregational system and the Collegial system of church governance. Both Bouwman and Hanko's denominations, namely the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Christian Reformed Church in North America respectively, have adopted the *Church Order of Dordt* but altered it to reflect their specific circumstances. These five church polity systems differ in their ecclesiology, where the power resides, discipline, the organization of the church as well as the relationship between church and state (c.f. Beattie, 2007:1-8).

#### 2.3 Different Forms of Church Government

##### 2.3.1 The Papal System / Episcopal System

The Papal system, also known as the Episcopal system, is closely tied to Roman Catholic theology and is related to the hierarchical system of Roman Catholicism (Hanko, 1962:6). The Prelatical

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<sup>3</sup> Clarence Bouwman was born and raised in the Canadian Reformed Churches, received his training for the ministry at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, and entered the ministry within the bond of these churches. In 1987, after five years' service in Canada, he accepted a call to one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Herman Hanko taught church polity at the Calvin College of the Christian Reformed Church in North America at Grand Rapids Michigan.

theory assumes the perpetuity of the apostleship as the governing power in the Church (Hodge, 1855:5). There are three orders of office-bearers in the Episcopalian system namely bishops, priests and deacons (Hanko, 1962: 6). According to Hanko (1962: 6) this superior order is in the succession of the apostles, with the rights of ordination and jurisdiction. These superior office-bearers are called *episcopoi* and are overseers of all members of the Episcopalian system and the lower clergy while the bishops are the ruling body (1962: 6). Bouwman (2000:26) points out that God calls and enables some of His people to serve in the special offices in the early church, namely the offices of elder and deacon. The apostles therefore appointed elders in every congregation (cf. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). In 1 Timothy 5:17 a distinction is being made between "*elders who rule*" and "*those who labour in the word and doctrine*" (Bouwman, 2000:26).

The foundation of the Papal system according to Hanko is that ecclesiastical ordination is originating from Christ and is continuing in uninterrupted succession from the apostles through the bishops (1962:6). Every bishop is *vice Christi*, Christ's vicar or vicegerent (Bingham, 1893:90-93). According to Berkhof episcopalianism hold that Christ, as the Head of the Church, has entrusted the government of the Church directly and exclusively to an order of prelates or bishops, as the successors of the apostles; and that He has constituted these bishops a separate, independent and self-perpetuating order (1949:401). There is a threefold difference between bishops and presbyters in the discharge of their office and function in the papal system. The bishop has independent power whilst the presbyters are subordinate to the bishop. The Council of Laodicea expressed it as follows: "The presbyters shall do nothing without the consent of the bishop, yet Bishops' power not arbitrary, hut limited by the Canon in various respects (Bingham, 1893:93).

Bouwman (2000:27) observes that the extent of the authority of the bishop was broadened over the years. Not only was the bishop the ruler of the church in his own town, but he also became the ruler over the leaders (later known as priests) of the churches in the smaller, neighbouring towns (Bouwman, 2000:27). A country was divided up into several dioceses, which all fell under the jurisdiction of one bishop. According to Bouwman (2000:27) it was unlawful for bishops to be appointed in the smaller towns. The smaller towns had to be satisfied with a priest, who in turn had to report to his superior in the bigger towns namely the bishop. The bishop of Rome eventually became the strongest of all bishops and by 400 AD. His position on the top of the ecclesiastical

ladder was commonly acknowledged by the churches (Bouwman, 2000:27). Rome was for years the capital city of the empire. People were therefore accustomed to receiving instructions from Rome and those of Rome were accustomed to give instructions. When the Roman Empire fell to Alaric in 410 AD the bishop of Rome was much involved in preventing widespread destruction. He therefore filled the vacuum left by the collapse of the emperor's authority (Bouwman, 2000:27). The result of the development was that the church ended up with an authority structure of priests, prelates, cardinals, bishops and the Pope, where the Pope ruled the entire western world, down to the priests at the bottom of the ladder who ruled over the village church (Bouwman, 2000:27).

The Roman Catholic Church claims autonomy, under the supreme control of the Pope who as the visible Vicar of Christ, and demands passive obedience from priests and people (Schaff, 1882:334). The Roman Catholic system comprises the successors of the apostles, but also claims to have the successor of Apostle Peter namely the Pope who is the head of the church (Berkhof, 1949:580). Berkhof furthermore argues that the Church of Rome is an absolute monarch, under the control of the Pope who has a right to determine and regulate the doctrine, worship and government of the church. In this system, the apostleship is perpetuated in the order of Prelates. After the ascension of Christ, Peter became his vicar. The Pope is therefore due to succession the Vicar of Christ. He is the universal head and ruler of the Church on earth (Hodge, 1855:50). The Pope is the chief of the bishop in the Episcopal system, “with jurisdiction over all” (Hanko, 1962: 6). He is an absolute monarch and the “infallible voice of Christ” (1962: 6). In the Roman Catholic Church the superior authority is first in the Pope and secondly in the other bishops. The Church of Rome is of the nature of an absolute monarchy, under the control of an infallible Pope, who has the right to determine and regulate the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church (Berkhof, 1949:401). This superior authority is graded and some of it may be delegated, as in case of a Papal delegate (Scanlan, 1909; 59).

In churches with an episcopal polity the Metropolitans (the diocesan bishop or archbishop of a metropolis) regulates the elections of their provincial bishops and either ordain, or authorize the ordination of them. No bishop was to be elected or ordained without their consent and approbation: otherwise, the canons pronounce both the election and ordination null. According to Bingham, the ratification of all that is done belongs to the Metropolitan in every province (1893:207). In an

Episcopal Church governance system, the Metropolitans decide in controversies arising among their provincial bishops and take appeals from them. They preside over their provincial bishops, and if any controversies arose among them the Metropolitan interpose their authority to end and decide upon controversies (Bingham, 1893:211). The Metropolitans call Provincial Synods, which all bishops are obliged to attend and to preside over it (Bingham, 1893:214). The Metropolitans further more publish imperial laws and canons, visit dioceses and correct abuses.

The Roman Catholic Church demands obedience from both priests and the people (Schaff, 1882(b):333). The laity is passive in the Roman Church. They has no shared in the legislation of the church. They simply have to obey the priesthood (Schaff, 1882(b):335).

Bouwman (2000:26) identifies the following factors that contributed to the rise of episcopatism:

- a) The minister of the Word tends to be the public face and voice of a congregation,
- b) In the face of heresies it is usually the minister of the Word who has the books and the knowledge required to defend Scripture,
- c) In times of persecution, the minister of the Word is often the first person to be arrested, causing people to respect and honour him for his suffering for Christ's sake. Eventually the term 'elder' vanished in the churches, and the minister of the Word alone received the title of Bishop; the minister was regarded as 'the elder' and this led to what is called '*Dominocracy*' (*domino* = minister, *cracy* = to rule (Bouwman, 2000:26).

The superior order is in the succession of the apostles, with the rights of ordination and jurisdiction. These superior office-bearers are called *episcopoi* and are overseers of all members of the church and the lower clergy. The bishops are the ruling body. Their presidency over the diocese is sacramental as they perform ordinations, confirmations and consecrations. After a period of about 400 years, the church adopted an authority structure similar to that of the secular political and economic system of the time, namely, a graded organisation of authority (Bouwman, 2000:27).

The Episcopal form of church governance is hierarchical in structure with the chief authority over a local Christian church resting in bishops who have authority over dioceses. Bishops in this system may be subject to a higher ranking. They also meet in councils or synods. These synods,



subject to presidency by higher-ranking bishops, may govern the dioceses, which are represented in the council, though the synod may also be purely advisory. This form of church government prevailed until the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The Episcopal structure is found most often in the various churches of either Orthodox or Catholic lineage. The African Independent Churches also embrace this form of church governance.

Bouwman (2000:28) identifies the following four as distinctive characteristics of the papal church government.

- a) The Papal church government is monarchical: *mono* = one, *arche*= rule. The Pope is the sole ruler.
- b) The Papal church government embraces the notion of one large universal church made up of smaller member churches. The authority structure is hierarchical.
- c) The authority of the Bible is replaced by the authority of the Pope. The first Vatican Council of 1871 declared the Pope's word (spoken officially) to be infallible.
- d) The office of all believers is not upheld (Bouwman, 2000:28).

Episcopal churches are organized under governance by bishops inter alia Roman Catholic, United Methodist and Episcopal denominations. Episcopal polity maintains that there are three distinct orders of ministers in the church: firstly bishops, secondly presbyters, priests or elders, and thirdly deacons. The bishops have superiority over the other orders. In an Episcopal Church governance system, the office-bearers are being seen as a separate class, in contradistinction from the ordinary members of the Church (Berkhof, 1949:404). Episcopal form of church governance is being embraced by the churches of Rome and England in the west of Europe, the Greeks and Armenians in the east, the Roman church in North and South America as well as the Protestant Episcopal and Moravian churches in the United States (Fillmore, 1847:28). Berkhof argues that this system does not conform to Scripture since it recognises the primacy of Peter over the other apostles and secondly it neglects the role of the people in ecclesiastical matters (Berkhof, 1939:580).

In the Episcopal system the laity (*coetus fidelium* or community of believers) has absolutely no share in the government of the Church (see Berkhof, 1949:401; Hanko, 1962:26). Berkhof claims that the Bible does not warrant the existence of such a separate class of superior officers, who have

the inherent right of ordination and jurisdiction, and therefore do not represent the people nor, in any sense of the word, derive their office from them. Berkhof's premise is that Scripture clearly shows that the apostolic office was not of a permanent nature. According to Berkhof before the end of the first century, the Apostolate had disappeared entirely (1949:401). However, the Roman Catholic system recognizes the Pope as the special representative of Christ. The papal system is according to Berkhof both exegetically and historically untenable (1949:402).

### **2.3.2 Lutheran System/Erastianism**

The Lutheran system/Erastianism is also known as the territorial system. The territorial system recognized the inherent right of the state to reform public worship, to decide disputes respecting doctrine and conduct, and to convene synods (Berkhof, 1949:402). The Lutheran system of church governance is linked with the actions of Martin Luther during the Reformation (Bouwman, 2000:28). On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg. Luther, amongst others, denied that the Pope was the head of the Church and thereby he ousted the Papal system of church government. Luther rejected canon law as an instrument of papal tyranny (Bakker, 1992:23; Schaff, 1882(a):95).

On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1519 a debate between Luther and Dr Johann Mair Eck on the subject of the papacy took place in Leipzig. Dr Eck was a professor of theology at Ingolstadt in Bavarian (Schaff 1882(a):105). Eck maintained that the Pope is the successor of Peter, and the Vicar of Christ by divine right. Luther argues that this claim is contrary to the Scriptures, to the ancient church and to the Council of Nicaea, and rests only on the frigid decrees of the Roman pontiffs (Schaff 1882(a):105). Luther's presumption was that the supremacy of the papacy was based on false pretence. His premise was that the seat of ecclesiastical power is the church, not its office-bearers, and that the church is the whole number of Christian believers, not the hierarchy (Walker, 1908:226).

With these convictions, Luther entered the discussion. He doubted the authority of the papacy, but to deny the infallibility of a general council was to break with all mediaeval orthodoxy. It was to break with the hierarchical system (Walker, 1908:226). Luther emphasises in his teaching,

*Treatise on Christian freedom*, the universal priesthood of Christians (Bouyer, 1982:48). In the Lutheran church the clergy are a ministry who serve by preaching, by guidance, by administration of the sacraments. They are not a priesthood divinely empowered with authority. Luther restored the priesthood of the believer. This view deconstructed the claims of the mediaeval hierarchy, either as dispensers of divine grace or as exclusive interpreters of the Word of God. A third feature of Luther's work of equal significance was Luther's insistence that the ordinary natural relations of family and society afford the highest opportunities for Christian living. Not in celibacy or monastic separation from the world but in its duties and normal relations is Christian service to be sought (Walker, 1908:233).

Because of Luther's rejection of the papal system of church government, the Pope excommunicated Luther from the church (Bouwman, 2000:28). According to Van't Spijker, Luther's conception of the church and its organization is directly linked with the doctrine of justification by faith alone (1992:87). Luther expressed his response to the Pope's decision by publicly set the bull of excommunication together with the papal decretals, the Canon law, (the Roman *Corpus Juris Canonici*), and several writings of Eck and Emser on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1520 alight and in so doing he underlined his rejection of the Pope and Papal church government (Schaff, 1882(a):142). The event of 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517 led to the break with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which was manifested on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1520 when Luther cast the papal decrees with the *corpus juris canonici* cast into the fire (Van't Spijker, 1992:87).

The papal monarchy and visible unity of Western Christendom were diminished with the burning of the Pope's bull and the canon law. The latter actions of Luther make a reconstruction of government and discipline a necessity (Schaff, 1882(a):185). Lutheranism in Germany substitute lay episcopate for clerical episcopate: in other words to lodge the supreme ecclesiastical power in the hands of the civil magistrate, who appoints ministers, superintendents and church counsellors as executive officers.

The Lutheran Churches in Germany have Superintendents and General Superintendents (called "Bishops" in Prussia, "Prelates" in Württemberg). Sweden, Norway, and Denmark retained or reintroduced episcopacy (*jure humano*, not *jure divino*) (Schaff, 1882(b):333). The

superintendents performed episcopal duties, but without constituting a distinct and separate grade of the ministry, and without the theory of the episcopal or apostolic succession (Schaff, 1882(a):185). Luther refused to submit to the Pope as the head of the Church.

Luther understood that each believer has been anointed to the threefold task of prophet, priest and king (Bouwman, 2000:28). Luther unsuccessfully tried to incorporate the office of all believers into his system of church governance. During 1523-1525 thousands of serfs revolted against the rich landowners on whose land, they lived and worked (Schaff, 1882(a):244). The serfs rejected the authority of those over them, but could not in turn develop fitting authority structures to replace the ones thrown aside (Bouwman, 2000:28). According to Bouwman the authority of the ruling class in secular society found its way into Lutheran churches as well. The Lutheran churches ended up with a system of church government that included the secular government (Bouwman, 2000:28). The secular government therefore received the right to control the affairs in the church, appoint ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons in communities and receive the right to exercise church discipline. In some areas, the church became nothing more than a government department according to Bouwman (2000:28). According to Schaff (1882(a):287-288) the German Reformation did not stimulate the duty of self-support, nor develop the faculty of self-government. It rather threw the church into the arms of the state:

The princes, nobles, and city magistrates were willing and anxious to take the benefit, but reluctant to perform the duties, of their new priestly dignity; while the common people remained as passive as before, without a voice in the election of their pastor, or any share in the administration of their congregational affairs. The Lutheran prince took the place of the bishop or pope; the Lutheran pastor, the place of the Romish priest, but instead of obeying the bishop, he had to obey his secular patron.

The authority of the Pope was replaced in the Lutheran system with the authority of the king (Bouwman, 2000:28). This king was not only the head of state, but was also the head of the Church (Bouwman, 2000:29). In the Church of England, the reigning monarch is still officially the head of the church. Church and state are connected in England and Ireland, and being established by law forms part of the common law or constitution of the country (Fillmore, 1847:74). According to Schaff, the Lutheran Reformers subjected the Church to the secular rulers, and made her an

obedient handmaid of the state. The congregations in most Lutheran countries of Europe have no voice in the election of their own pastors (Schaff, 1882(b):333).

The churches in Holland were also influenced by Erastianism, particularly after the decision of the Dutch government in 1816 to impose a new administrative church order by the State, *Het Algemeen Reglement*. This led to the Secession of 1834 (Bouwman, 2000:29, Janssen 2000:2). Erastianism is named after Thomas Erastus (1524-1583) who was born at Baden, Switzerland in 1524 and studied theology and medicine at Basil, Pavia, and Bologna (Hanko, 1962:6). The real name of Erastus was Thomas Lieber or Liebler.

In 1560 and again in 1564 he attended the conferences of Lutheran and Reformed theologians at which was discussed the problems of the Lord's Supper (Hanko, 1962:6). Erastus considered the policy of excommunicating members from the Protestant churches an unwise one and improper. His presumption was that offenders should rather be punished with civil penalties by the temporal magistrates (Hanko, 1962:6). Thomas Erastus opposed excommunication as unscriptural and advocated instead punishment by civil authorities.

The premise of Erastianism is that the state is superior to the church in ecclesiastical matters. Erastianism regards the church as a society, which owes its existence and form to regulations enacted by the state. In this view, the office-bearers of the Church are merely instructors or preachers of the Word without any right or power to rule except that which they derive from the civil magistrates (Berkhof, 1939: 401; 579). The premises of the Erastinans are that it is the function of the state to govern the Church, to exercise discipline and to excommunicate. Church censures are civil punishments though their application may be entrusted to the legal office-bearers of the Church. This system has been variously applied in England, Scotland, and Germany (Lutheran Churches). In England, episcopatism is combined with the Erastian system (Berkhof, 1949:401). Erastianism conflicts with the fundamental principle of the Headship of Jesus Christ, and does not recognize the fact that Church and state are distinct and independent in their origin, in their primary objects, in the power they exercise as well as in the administration of that power (Berkhof, 1949:401). The Lutheran church is actually a national church.

The following is being identified by church polity exponents like Bouwman and Hanko as characteristics of Erastianism/Lutheran system of church governance:

- a) Lutheran church government is monarchical: *mono* = one, *arche* = rule. Not the Pope but the King is the sole ruler.
- b) Lutheran church government embraces the notion of a national church, formed along national boundaries.
- c) The local church has no authority.
- d) Erastianism gives the state authority over the church (Bouwman, 2000:29; Hanko, 1962:6).

### **2.3.3 Reformed/Presbyterian church governance**

In this section, both the Reformed and Presbyterian forms of church polity are being expounded. It is apparent that the two systems though similar and have much in common are not the same. Both trace their origin to John Calvin, but are influence by different contexts. Presbyterianism was influenced by the developments in Scotland and the Westminster tradition while Reformed polities matured in Geneva. The Presbyterian Church governance system holds for example to three pillars according to Hodge. Namely, people have a right to a substantive part in the government of the church, the presbyters who minister the Word and doctrine are the highest permanent officers of the church, the visible church is or should be one, in the sense the smaller is subject to the larger and the larger to the whole (Hodge, 1855:7)

#### **2.3.3.1. Reformed church governance**

According to du Plooy (2014:5) Calvin may be regarded as the architect of the reformed churches and as the father of Reformed church polity. Calvin was a legislator and is the founder of system of church polity and discipline employed in reformed/Presbyterian churches across the globe. Calvin already established in 1537 in Geneva rules of order for pastors and deacons. In 1541 Calvin, the four pastors (Viret, Jacques Bernard, Henry de la Mare, and Aymé Champereau) and six councilors to whom was added Jean Balard as advisory member, was appointed to draw up a new code of laws for Geneva (Schaff, 1882(b):338; Johnson, 1900:49). John Calvin built his understanding of church government on the foundation laid by Martin Bucer (Bouwman, 2000:29). Calvin too, like Martin Bucer emphasized the office of all believers. Many of the principles of

Reformed church polity are to be found in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* especially in Book IV (Hanko, 1962:6).

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1542 the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* was ratified by a general assembly of citizens (the *Conseil général*), as the fundamental church law of the Republic of Geneva (Schaff 1882(b):339). On the basis of 1 Corinthians 14: 40 "Let all things be done decently and in order" Calvin distinguished the "power to make laws," the power to govern and the power to teach in both the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* as well as the *Institutes of Christian Religion*.

The distinctive principles of Calvin's system of government are:

- a) The self-government of the church under the headship of Christ. Calvin distinguished sharply between church and state. God in Christ is head of both church and state.
- b) Ecclesiastical discipline of all the members of the church from the greatest to the smallest to be exercised by a parliamentary court consisting of ministers of the Word and ruling elders.
- c) A consistory, or parliamentary court, consisting of elders of two classes, to exercise this discipline.
- d) The recognition and reinstitution of the New Testament ruling eldership (*Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV. Chapter 3.x; Chapter 10.vii, xxvii-xxxiii).

Leith (1977:143) indicates five features of Calvin's polity. Firstly, Calvin emphasises that the integrity and competence of pastors should be maintained by careful examination of life, the ability to study theology and the capacity to communicate the Word of God. On the minister of the Word was discharged the responsibility of preaching, leadership, worship, teaching and of pastoral care. Secondly, the consistory had the responsibility to oversee the discipline of the congregation. Discipline was not an end in itself. It rather ensured that:

- a) The glory and honour of God was affirmed again,
- b) That evil should not corrupt the good,
- c) That those who had fallen into sin were helped wholeheartedly.

Thirdly, Calvin lays emphasis on catechetical instruction. Christians must know what they believe through regular programmes of catechetical instruction. Fourthly, Calvin lays emphasis on the

office of the deacon as the church's ministry of compassion. Lastly and the most notable feature of Calvin's polity is the emphasis on the acts of God by His Spirit through the Word and sacraments that create the church. All formal marks of the church and all structures are subordinate to the grace of God (Leith, 1977:144-146).

Calvin's premise is that it is the duty of the church to maintain relations of absolute independence and separation from the state (Johnson, 1900:50). Calvin deals extensively with this matter in Book 4 of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* where he frequently makes it clear that church government should not deviate from the precepts set out in Scripture. Calvin maintains that church judicial regulations should be fully divine in character (*prorsus divinae*), in other words, derived from Scripture (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book IV, Chapter 12.2; Book IV Chapter 10.27).

John Calvin emphasizes in the *Institutes of Christian Religion* the order through which the Lord wants His church to be managed. Christ as head of the Church, rule and reign in the church. He holds to the highest authority and administers this sovereignty through His Word and Holy Spirit. The twenty chapters of Book IV of the *Institutes of Christian Religion* entail the following themes: Of the Church, Of the Sacraments, Of Civil Government (*Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV Chapters 1-20). Calvin maintains that Christ's sovereignty and authority in the church are executed through the ministries that He gives the church in both their individual capacities and when members congregate in meetings (*Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV Chapter 3). Calvin lays great stress on the outward organization and order of the Church, but in subordination to sound doctrine and the inner spiritual life. He compares the former to the body, while the doctrine which regulates the worship of God, and points out the way of salvation, is the soul which animates the body and renders it lively and active (Schaff, 1882(b): 333). All believers are righteous in Christ and partake in Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest and king (Bouwman, 2000:29). These believers are united by one faith in one Christ, and therefore are one body together - a Church. Christ as Head rules over His Church specifically through the office of the elder (Bouwman, 2000:29)



The Reformed church government is characterized by a system of ecclesiastical assemblies, namely the consistory, the classis (presbytery) and the synod. These may be in ascending or descending order (Berkhof, 1962:193). These assemblies are representative; with elders who are freely elected attending with their pastors (Witherow, 1967:67-71). The consistory comprises the pastor or pastors and the elders of the local church. The classis is made up of the pastor and one elder from each local church. The synod consists of an equal number of the elders and ministers of the Word from each classis (Berkhof, 1962:193). The underlying principle of this structure is based on the requirement of church articles that “No church (local congregation) shall have precedence or rule over another church, no minister over another minister, no elder over another elder, no deacon over another deacon, but each will be alert for all suspicion thereof and occasion thereto.”<sup>5</sup> This principle excludes any thought of hierarchical relationship between the various office-bearers and assemblies of the church (Blei, 2006:15). The relationship between the different church assemblies is addressed within the context of mutuality. The local congregation is a church and therefore a complete body of Christ. The council of the local church is made up of the elders and the minister of the Word. The classis is the link between the local congregation and the synod, either provincial or national. The local church is a complete manifestation of the church of Christ. It is a complete church by itself and as a unit. The church's responsibilities is divided among multiple offices and office-bearers. Ministers of the Word are to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. Doctors are to educate the parishioners. Elders are to maintain discipline and order and adjudicate disputes. Deacons are to control church finances of and to coordinate the church's care for the poor and needy. Each of these office-bearers, Calvin believed, is to be elected by fellow communicant members of the congregation. Each is subjected to the limitation of the office and the supervision of fellow officers. Each is to participate in periodic congregational meetings that allow members to assess their performance and to debate matters of doctrine and discipline (Witte, 2010:49).

The Reformed/Presbyterian church government is known by the word Presbyterian, 'presbyter' being the Greek word for elder. Reformed church government is *elder-centred* church government (Bouwman, 2000:30). 1 Timothy 5:17 speaks of two kinds of elders, but the one does not have

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<sup>5</sup> The Synod of Emden in Germany East Friesland was city where it was held on 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> October 1571. This synod drew the first outlines of the organization and structure of the Reformed Church.

more authority than the other has Bouwman (2000:30). (c.f. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9; 1 Corinthians 1:18-29; Titus 1:5-9). Bouwman (2000:29) is of the opinion that Calvin checkmated the Pope with the pawn of the elder. According to Bouwman (2000:29) God is pleased to use the "pawn of the elder", the 'little man', in order to cultivate growth in His congregation. Johnson (1900:35) highlights that Calvin, in his practical work in Geneva, had had a threefold end in view, namely

- a) The independence of the church of state control,
- b) The government of the church by itself enforced by penalties including that of excommunication from the sealing ordinances,
- c) The reform of society, both civil and religious, by the united powers of church and state.

Johnson deduced the following as distinctive principles of this system of government (see Johnson, 1990:47-57):

- a) The self-government of the church under the headship of Christ. Calvin believed that God in Christ is head of both church and state.
- b) Ecclesiastical discipline of all the members of the church from the greatest to the smallest to be exercised by a parliamentary court consisting of ministers of the Word and ruling elders. Calvin valued discipline as second only to teaching. Calvin formally sets forth the importance of discipline in his introduction to the discussion of "The Discipline of the Church" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book IV. Chapter 12). Calvin distinguished three degrees of discipline: private admonition, admonition in the presence of witnesses or before the church, and excommunication.
- c) A consistory, or parliamentary court, consisting of elders of two classes, to exercise discipline.
- d) The recognition and reinstitution of the New Testament ruling eldership. (Rom. 12: 8 and I Cor. 12: 28). Calvin reinstituted the New Testament office of the deacon. They were elected in the same manner as the elders.

Berkhof on his side also indicates that there are fundamental principles of the Reformed or Presbyterian system, which are directly derived from Scripture (Berkhof, 1949:403).

- a) Christ is the Head of the church and the source of all its authority.
- b) Christ exercises his authority by means of his royal word.
- c) Christ as King has endowed the church with power.
- d) Christ provided for the specific exercise of this power by representative organs.
- e) The power of the church resides primarily in the governing body of the local church. (Berkhof, 1949:403-405).

Bouwman (2000:30) observes that, the concept of church government that Calvin promoted did not get off the ground in Geneva where Calvin lived. However, in France, the Netherlands, and Scotland the Presbyterian form of church government received a prominent place in the church (Bouwman, 2000:30). Bouwman concluded that although the Reformed and the Presbyterian Church government are not the same both fit into the category of Reformed church government (Bouwman, 2000:30).

De Ridder (1983:19) stresses that Reformed church polity is a system of church government, which is governed by a council comprising the minister(s) of the Word, the elders, and the deacons. His definition seems to be a summary of the first part of article 30 of the *Belgic Confession* (see Addendum 1). ‘We believe, that this true Church must be governed by that spiritual policy [polity] which our Lord hath taught us in his Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church’ Paas (2007:45ff). “Here the *Belgic Confession* keeps in balance the three offices -minister, elder and deacon which constitute the government of the local congregation” (Paas, 2007:45). Presbyterian Church government, according to De Ridder (1983:20), has the following four characteristics:

- a) First, there is one basic office, the eldership, consisting of teaching or ordained elders, and ruling elders.
- b) Secondly, the ecclesiastical assemblies are arranged in a hierarchical order, a Church Council as a lower court, a Presbytery as a basic governmental unit, and a Synod or General Assembly as the highest court these courts often function as judicatories.

- c) Thirdly, these courts emphasize the ruling power (authority) of the elders.<sup>6</sup>
- d) Fourthly, the church council is in many ways responsible to the Presbytery and under its control (De Ridder, 1983:20).

Bouwman and Hanko point out the following characteristics as being unique to the Reformed church government:

- a) Reformed church government acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and that He rules His Church by the office-bearers, the *elders*.
- b) The local congregation is, in itself, a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. (See Article 27 *Belgic Confession*; see Addendum 1).
- c) Reformed church government recognizes that all believers are equipped by the Holy Spirit to carry out the office of all believers.
- d) These autonomous congregations unite together into a federation of churches.
- e) They are called to express unity in a common confession.
- f) Within the federation of churches, each congregation remains autonomous (Bouwman, 2000:30; Hanko, 1962:6).

Article 27 of the *Belgic Confession* reads as follows:

**Article 27—The Catholic or Universal Church**

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. This Church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects. This holy Church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world, although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man. Thus during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord kept for Himself seven thousand persons who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Moreover, this holy Church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

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<sup>6</sup> Akin Brand (2004:148) observed that the Scottish Presbyterianism is Episcopal by nature. The Synod or General Synod is the highest assembly. From it authority flows downward to the lower ecclesiastical courts. In the Congregational system the highest authority is all members of the local church. This means from them authority flows upward to the higher courts.

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ, and for the promotion of its true welfare offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline were instituted by the Reformers (Van Dellen & Monsma, 1967:19; Schaff, 1882:330).

Reformed church government is elder-centred church government. According to Hanks (1962:6) the autonomy of the local congregation is the chief principle of the Reformed system of church government. Hanks (1962:6) affirms furthermore that the local congregation is, in itself, a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. Within this local congregation is the office of believers who function as prophets, priests, and kings in the church. Secondly, within that principle of the Reformed system are the special offices of ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons. The offices are called by Christ. Christ rules His church through the offices. Hanks (1962:6) indicates that these special offices stand in unique relation to the office of believers. The believers take part in all the governance of the church; whilst in both the Episcopal and Lutheran system the office of all believers has no place. Hanks (1962:6) adds that while Christ rules this autonomous congregation' through the special offices in the church, the office of believers comes to expression in that the believers take part in all the governance of the church."

#### **2.3.3.2. Presbyterian Church governance**

The essential features of the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* have passed into the constitutions of most of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of Europe, America and Africa. According to Schaff (1882(b):333-336) the Calvinistic system of church polity is based upon the following principles:

- a) The autonomy of the Church, or its right of self-government under the sole headship of Christ. Calvin vests the self-government in the Christian congregation, and regards all the ministers of the Word, in their official character, as ambassadors and representatives of Christ.
- b) The independence of the Church in all spiritual affairs, and the right of individual congregations in the election of their own pastors.
- c) The parity of the clergy as distinct from a *jure divino* hierarchy whether papal or Prelatical.
- d) The participation of the Christian laity in Church government and discipline.

- e) Strict discipline to be exercised jointly by ministers of the Word and lay-elders, with the consent of the whole congregation.
- f) Union of Church and State on a theocratic basis, if possible, or separation, if necessary to secure the purity and self-government of the Church.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) affirms the following historic principles of Presbyterian Church government and discipline:

- a) The right of private judgment both for the individual or group within the church and for the church within the state. The right of private judgment is freedom from arbitrary laws, civil or ecclesiastical, which bind conscience. The individual has the right to dissent from church laws, which the person believes to be a violation of conscience. The corporate conscience of the church is expressed through the governing bodies (session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly).
- b) This second Principle makes it clear that there is no basic conflict between the freedom of conscience and the necessity for the church to make rules to order its life. Churches have the right to regulate their own internal affairs without government interference. Individuals, also, have the right to exercise private judgment within the decision-making processes of the church of which they are a part. Every member of a governing body has the basic rights to: (1) know, (2) speak, (3) vote and (4) hold office. These rights enable every member to participate fully in the decision-making processes, being heard and exercising influence upon the body. When a church body takes an action, individuals may register their disapproval. When the governing body does require compliance with an action, it is still possible for a dissenting individual to agree to abide by the decision and to fulfill the requirements for action while, at the same time, holding a different position from that of the majority.
- c) The church must have order in its life. Church officers function as representative members of governing bodies and exercise responsibility corporately.

- d) Presbyterian polity provides a method for dealing with conflict. The processes assure that fairness and order accompany the decision-making and that differing points of view will be openly expressed.
- e) Nonessential issues are those subjects about which diversity is understood to be desirable or acceptable. Essential matters are those regarding which the church does require uniformity of either belief or practice. No church governing body may bind conscience contrary to Scripture.
- f) The Holy Scripture defines the general character, qualifications, authority, and purpose of church officers but the church must interpret Scripture and establish the general rules by which it operates.
- g) Scripture is the highest authority and no governing body may legislate contrary to what Scripture plainly teaches. This respect for Scripture means that all church bodies must exercise care not claiming too much authority for themselves. Ministerial power is performed in a carefully prescribed manner in obedience to the higher authority of Scripture. Declarative power is limited to that of stating what biblical teaching is in a given situation.
- h) There is one body, which is the church, and all the diverse parts of that body make up the whole. Action on the part of any governing body has an impact upon all the others. Presbyterian polity seeks to express the wholeness and unity of the church by insisting upon the interrelatedness of all the parts.
- i) The larger part of the church is given authority over the smaller. Each governing body is representative of a part of the church and it is given a particular role to play in the whole with carefully described powers and duties. Each governing body also has limitations upon its acts imposed by the Constitution.
- j) Every governing body is composed of persons who are elected to represent the church. Representatives are not simply to reflect the will of the people but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ for the Church
- k) The unity of the church is exemplified in the provision for appeals from one governing body to another. When an individual believes that a wrong has been committed in a congregation, for example, that person may appeal to a more

inclusive governing body, the presbytery, and failing to be satisfied there, may carry the complaint on to the synod and General Assembly. This right of appeal recognizes the right and duty of the more inclusive governing body to make decisions binding upon the less inclusive body (*United Presbyterian Church, Report of the Special Committee on Historic Principles, Conscience, and Church Government* 1983:141ff).

A Presbyterian form of church polity is in contrast to both the Episcopal and the Congregational church governance systems. The Presbyterian form of government affirms that there is but one order of ministers of the Word as established by Christ and his apostles, that all being ambassadors, are equal by their commission, and that bishop and elder or presbyter are the same in name, and office, and their terms synonymous (Fillmore, 1847:28).

Presbyterianism negates that all church power vests in the clergy: that the apostolic office is perpetual and that each individual Christian congregation is independent. Presbyterianism affirms according to Hodge (1855:7) that the people have a right to a substantive part in the government of the Church, that presbyters who minister in Word and doctrine, are the highest permanent officers of the Church, and all belong to the same order and lastly that the outward and visible Church is, or should be, one, in the sense that a smaller part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole. It is not however not holding one of these principles that makes entails Presbyterianism, rather holding them all.

#### **2.3.4. The Congregational church governance**

In England and America (New England) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, churches originated which were closely linked to the teachings of the Reformed on the European continent and the Presbyterians in Scotland, but on the church establishment went its own way (Deddens, 1992:105). In doing so Reformed church polity took hold in Scotland, including its basic characteristic emphases on the office of all believers and on the authority of the local congregation (c.f. Bouwman, 2000:30). The reformed English (puritans) rejected the state church and established ecclesiastical structures that imitate the pattern in the Bible. The name ‘Congregational’ has become customary in the course



of time. The Congregational churches were originally limited to the Anglo-Saxon world but are currently spread across the globe (Deddens, 1992:105). It is a principle of Congregationalism, that

- a) The Scriptures are recognized as the only infallible guide respecting church order and discipline.
- b) A visible Christian church is a voluntary association of professed Christians, united together by a covenant for the worship of God and the celebration of religious ordinance are authorized to elect necessary officers, to discipline offending members, and to act, authoritatively and conclusively, upon all appropriate business, independently of the control of any persons whatsoever.
- c) A church should ordinarily consist of only so many members as can conveniently assemble for public worship, the celebration of religious ordinances, and the transaction of church business.
- d) Every church is competent to choose its own officers, discipline its own members, and transact all other appropriate business, independently of any other church, or ecclesiastical body or person; or, in other words that all church power is vested in the hands of those who constitute the church. (Punchard, 1844:29; 47-69)

In response to the episcopal authority in the church, Robert Browne (1550-1636) founded in 1580 a separatist church. His premise was that each church should be radically independent and should not be dominated by presbyters. Separate assemblies could confer, but take no confessions.

Browne's independentism reacts against clerical domination by taking Luther's priesthood of the faithful as a starting point. Ordinarily the Congregational and Baptist churches are organized under the governance of the local congregation led by elders. In the words of Berkhof, each church or congregation is a complete church independent of every other. The governing power rests exclusively with the members of the church, who are entitled to regulate their own affairs (Berkhof, 1939:580). Punchard explains that there are two kinds of permanent church officers namely elders (sometimes called pastors, teachers, ministers of the Word, overseers, bishops,) and deacons (1844:69). The Independents are similar to the Congregationalist, except that they decide all difficulties entirely within themselves (Fillmore, 1847:29). During 1640-1660, a group in the Church arose who was against the need for a bond of churches (Bouwman, 2000:30). The premise

of the Congregationalists is that the New Testament Scriptures neither prescribe a bond of churches nor tell of congregations bound together by a 'super-structure' as a classis or a synod. Instead, the Congregationalists preferred to see each local church as independent from other churches in the neighbourhood and that each local church, is solely responsible to the Lord (Bouwman, 2000:30).

Decisions in a congregational church government system are strictly advisory or declarative. It is therefore not binding on any particular church. Berkhof asserts that the theory that each church is independent of every other church and that the office of the ministry is dependent on the action of the people juxtaposes teachings from the Word of God. This system opens according to Berkhof the door for all kinds of arbitrariness in church government. There is also in a congregational church government system no appeal from any of the decisions of the local church (Berkhof, 1949:402).

The principles of Congregationalism are as follows:

- a) Scriptures are the only infallible guide in matters of church order and discipline.
- b) It is a voluntary association of professed Christians, united together for the worship of God and the celebration of religious ordinances.
- c) It consists ordinarily only so many members as can conveniently assemble for public worship, the celebration of religious ordinances (Punchard, 1844:29-68).

This form of church government is sometimes also called Independentism. Its fundamental principle is that the local congregation is completely independent from other churches (Bouwman, 2000:30; Berkhof, 1949:402). Bouwman (2000:30) notes that these Independents did not insist on adherence to any confessions. The propositions of this system are that each church or congregation is a complete church, independent of every other. The governing power of the church rests exclusively with the members of the church, who are entitled to regulate their own affairs. Office-bearers are simply functionaries of the local church, appointed to teach and to administer the affairs of the church, and have no governing power beyond that which they possess as members of the church Berkhof asserts (1949:402).

The Congregational form of government is democratic by nature. All the male members have ordinarily the right to vote. The clergy has no veto power (2000:30). Ecclesiastical councils help in the administration of church government. The Congregational form of church governance recognizes a council of an advisory kind, but not possessing appellate jurisdiction (Fillmore, 1847:29). Congregationalists embrace ordinarily church governance of a single congregation, under the direction of one pastor. The local congregation decides all controversies. The ecclesiastical councils are called to organize churches, to ordain and dismiss pastors, to depose from the ministry and to assist in the settlement of difficulties (Punchard, 1844:103). A mutual council is one in which the parties, on whose behalf the council is called, are agreed. An *ex parte* council is called by one of the parties, the other refusing to unite in a mutual council. Bouwman (2000:30) observes that this vote by the members of the independent or congregational churches admits, dismisses members or passes censure on members. Local churches stand in very loose relation to other congregations, with no broader gatherings except to decide matters of general welfare and the decisions of these gatherings are only declarative (Bouwman, 2000:30).

The Congregational form of ecclesiastical polity regards every church as a distinct community, independent of all others, and as containing within itself what is necessary for its own government. “Rejecting the subordination of the clergy, and all dependence on other assemblies, except of an advisory kind, it declares that a church is composed of a single congregation with; a pastor and two or more deacons; and that according to the New Testament it has plenary ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all its members, independent of the authority of bishops or archbishops, synods, presbyteries or any other ecclesiastical assemblies.” (Fillmore, 1847:89). Bouwman and Hanco indicates the following are distinctive features of congregational church government:

- a) Congregationalism virtually absolutises the office of all believers.
- b) The congregational church government stresses the local gathering to the exclusion of the fact that the Lord gathers a universal church.
- c) Local churches stand in very loose relation to other congregations, with no broader gatherings except to decide matters of general welfare.
- d) The decisions of these gatherings are only declarative.
- e) The local congregation is completely independent from other churches.
- f) In government, it is strictly democratic.

- g) The vote of the members admits and dismisses members and passes censure.
- h) Local churches stand in very loose relation to other congregations, with no broader gatherings except to decide matters of general welfare.
- i) The decisions of these gatherings are only declarative. (Bouwman, 2000:30; Hanko, 1962:5).

In an independent church governance system, power is vested in the Church at large, and that the office-bearers are merely the organs of the body as a whole (Berkhof, 1949:404).

### **2.3.5 Collegial church governance**

Collegialism is derived from the Roman law concept *collegia licita* pointing to a legal association. Collegial church governance has its roots in the rise of humanism in the time of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The Collegial system (which supplanted the Territorial system) was developed in Germany especially by C.M. Pfaff (1686-1780). It was later introduced to Netherlands. It proceeds from the assumption that the church is a voluntary society (Berkhof, 1939:581). Collegial church governance defines the church as a society of voluntary members independent of the state, self-governing, and with authority vested in the members. The original power resides in the national organisation and this organisation has jurisdiction over local churches. It ascribes to the state only the right of supervision as an inherent right and regards all other rights, which the state might exercise in Church matters, as tacit understanding or by a formal pact conferred upon the state (Berkhof, 1939:581).

The premise is that there is no Head of the Church on earth. According to Berkhof, the collegial form of church governance proceeds on the assumption that the Church is a voluntary association, equal to the State. The premise is that separate churches or congregations are merely sub-divisions of the one national Church. The original power resides in a national organization, and this organization has jurisdiction over the local churches (Berkhof, 1949:402). Collegial system of church governance is therefore according to Berkhof the reverse of the Presbyterian system, according to which the original power has its seat in the consistory. The Collegial system ascribes to the State only the right of supervision as an inherent right, and regards all other rights, which the State might exercise in Church matters, as rights, which the Church by a tacit understanding

or by a formal pact conferred upon the State (Berkhof, 1949:402). The Collegial system furthermore “disregards altogether the autonomy of the local churches, ignores the principles of self-government and of direct responsibility to Christ, engenders formalism, and binds a professedly spiritual Church by formal and geographical lines” (Berkhof, 1949:402). The members delegate by way of constitution their natural right to govern themselves to representatives of the top management of the church. The church is seen as an institution (*collegium*). The church will therefore give special assignments and authority to certain officials, which are virtually officials in the service of the church. The premise of the Collegial system is that a constitution establish a church. The Collegialism regarded the Church Order as the constitution that determines the nature of the institution (constitute). “The church is not a heavenly work performed on earth; the church is rather a society of like-minded people, a religious club made up of spiritually interested folk.” (Bouwman, 2000:31). The office-bearers have no authority in collegial church governance system. Office-bearers are nothing else than the representatives of the people (Bouwman, 2000:30). The following are distinctive features of collegial church government:

- a) That it recognises no authority from heaven,
- b) Finds its authority base in the people themselves,
- c) Collegialism is like congregationalism a democratic form of church order and government. The voice of the majority is the highest authority (*vox populi vox Dei est*) (Bouwman, 2000:30).

Hodge states it emphatically that the Church is not a vast democracy, where everything is decided by the popular voice.

Barth emphasizes in his *Church Dogmatics* that church polity should be founded on an Christological and ecclesiological understanding of the church. This understanding determines the whole organization of the church and the law of the church. As *jus liturgicum*, (*liturgical law*), church law finds its seat in worship in the order of the divine service, common confession, sacraments, prayer (Barth, 1958:695). Christ is manifested in worship. Worship in its entirety (confession, baptism, communion, and prayers) is performed by people and is prone to misunderstanding and abuse. Therefore, the church law must deal with the order of worship. According to Barth church law is “a law of service”, church law is “liturgical law”, and church law is “living law” and “true church law is exemplary law (Barth, 1958:690-726; Koffeman,

2014:88-89). All regulations of the Church are of force only as far as the people themselves, in conjunction with their ministers of the Word, see fit to sanction and adopt them (Hodge, 1855:19-20). Christ manifests in worship in its entirety (confession, baptism, communion, prayers). The church law deals therefor with the order of worship (Bakker, 1992:41).

## **2.3 Reformed/Presbyterian Church Polity principles**

Plaatjies-Van Huffel coined the concept Reformed/Presbyterian Church Polity principles. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:34) argues that six Reformed/Presbyterian Church Polity principles can be deduced namely:

- a) Self-government under the sole headship of Christ,
- b) The limited autonomy of the local congregation,
- c) The denominational ties serve the well-being of the Church,
- d) The restricted power and responsibilities of ecclesial assemblies,
- e) The necessity and nature of Christian discipline,
- f) Right of appeal,
- g) The power of the major assemblies with regard to misconduct.

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) warns that violation of these principles can lead either to independent church governance or to hierarchy. She furthermore asserts that the basis of Presbyterian/Reformed polity is theological and affirms that the Reformed church polity principles are being shaped by the work of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer John Calvin (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:31). According to Berkhof, Reformed Churches do not claim that their system of Church Government is determined in every detail by the Word of God, but do assert that its fundamental principles are directly derived from Scripture (1939:581). Berkhof further argues that these are general principles and admit that many of its particulars are determined by expediency and human wisdom (1939:581).

### **2.4.1. Self-government under the sole headship of Christ**

One of the fundamental church polity principles which both Reformed and Presbyterian churches embraces is self-government under the sole headship of Christ (c.f. Schaff, 1882(a):102; Berkhof, 1939:581; Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:36). In both the Reformed and Presbyterian church

governance system the church is being described as the body of Christ and Jesus Christ as the only Head (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:5; *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book IV, Book 1.i; 8.ii, iv-vi). Charles Hodge, a Presbyterian Church polity expert, states in his address delivered before the Presbyterian Historical Society during 1855 emphatically that the Church is a theocracy (Hodge, 1855:7). God rules his church by Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 24-28; Ephesians 1: 22). He does this through His Word and Spirit and uses people. One of the fundamental Reformed church polity principles is self-government under the sole headship of Christ. The church is described as the body of Christ and Jesus Christ as the only Head (*Belgic Confession*, art. 29; see Addendum 1). The foundation stone of that faith embedded in a church order should be that Christ is the Head of the Church (c.f. Giles, 1995: 126) leads guides and protects the Church (Giles, 1995:126). Christ is the only lawful Head of the visible Church, and is therefore the only supreme Lawgiver and King of the Church (Berkhof, 1949:403). Christ is the Head, of the invisible Church, which constitutes His spiritual body, but He is also the Head of the visible Church, not only in the organic sense, but also in the sense that He has authority and rule over it, Matt. 16:18,19; 23:8,10; John 13:13; I Cor. 12:5; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:4,5,11,12; 5:23,24 (Berkhof, 1949:403). The Headship of Christ over the visible Church authority is manifested according to Berkhof in the following points:

- a) He instituted the Church of the New Testament, Matt. 16:18.
- b) He instituted the means of grace, which the Church must administer, namely, the Word and the sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 22:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-29.
- c) He gave to the Church its constitution and officers, and clothed them with divine authority, so that they can speak and act in His name, Matt. 10:1; 16:19; John 20:21-23; Eph. 4:11, 12.
- d) He is present in the Church when it meets for worship, and speaks and acts through its officers. Matt. 10:40; II Cor. 13:3 (Berkhof, 1949:404).

Coertzen (2004:95) referring to Calvin argues, that Christ Himself alone rules and reigns in the Church, and must also have the leadership in the church and hold the highest authority and practice and administer this sovereignty only through His word (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book IV, Chapter III; I Mathew 16:18; I Corinthians 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:22; Vorster 2003:10).

Coertzen premise is that to indicate that Jesus is the Head of the church is also to say that He is the only one who governs His church in a way that God has planned it from the very beginning.

Christ exercises His authority in the Church through the office-bearers. These officers of the Church have no absolute or independent, but only a derived and ministerial power (Berkhof, 1949:404). Jesus Christ endowed the Church with the necessary power or authority and endowed not only Peter but all the apostles, the church at large, with power and with the right to judge (Matt. 16:18; John 20:23; Acts 15:23-29; 16:4; I Cor. 5:7,13; 6:2-4; 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16). The office-bearers in the Church receive their authority from Christ and not from the church (Berkhof, 1949:410). The power of the Church is no independent and sovereign power, but a *diakonia leitourgia*, a ministerial power (Acts 4:29,30; 20:24; Rom. 1:1; Matt. 28:18-19; Rom. 10:14,15; Eph. 5:23; I Cor. 5:4; Matt. 16:19; John 20:23; 18:17; I Cor. 5:4; Tit. 3:10; Heb. 12:15-17).

Christ has taught us in His Word how He rules His church. We confess it in Lord's Day 12, Q & A 31: He "*governs us by His Word and Spirit.*" Bouwman (2000:12). The word 'Church' (in the original Greek of the New Testament, *ecclesia*) means a congregation, or assembly and the character of the assembly, to which it is applied, is to be ascertained by the use of the term in each particular instance. Coertzen (2004:82) states that the church is all those people who accept God's rule in Christ. The church exists to serve the ministry to God, to serve ministry to believers and to serve ministry to the world. The church can be likened to a mother to the believers. "The mother conceives us in her womb, gives us birth, feeds us from her breast, and lastly keeps us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like angels" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Chapter IV:4). It is in the church that, as a mother does, the members are nurtured and matured. Human weaknesses demand that members remain under the care of the church. Through the preaching and teaching of the word of God, the church grows and becomes strong (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV Chapter 5). The task of the church is to nurture its membership by undiluted proclamation of the Gospel, the genuine administration of the sacraments, according to the institution of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as imposing church discipline for sins (Coertzen, 2004:84). This is important, for all things must be done decently and in an orderly way (I Corinthians 14:40). The church is spoken of as holy congregation of true Christian believers, body



of Christ, belonging to Him, who are expecting their salvation in Him, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost (*Belgic Confession* Article 27; see Addendum 1).

The church is established and maintained by God. Article three of the Apostle's Creed declares, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic church." In this article, the church is being seen as a result of the working of God through His Holy Spirit. In the Apostle's Creed, the church is characterized as being Holy Catholic, and fellowship of saints; it is a community elected by Christ from all of humanity to eternal life. The church is named as an object of faith in the Apostle's Creed. The church is an elect communion and stands in relation to the whole community (Rohls, 1998:166-167). This truth is further affirmed in the *Heidelberg Catechism*: "I believe that from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, by His Spirit and his Word, gathers, protects and preserves for Himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for the eternal life." This is a very important understanding for the formulation of any church order that has the underpinnings of Scripture. The church is not a result of any human effort or work, it is entirely and solely the work of the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>7</sup> The church has distinctive marks that make it stand out from among all other human organizations. The *Belgic Confession* states:

We believe that we ought, diligently and circumspectly, to discern from the Word of God, which is the true church. But we speak not here of hypocrites, who are mixed in the church with the good, yet are not of the church, though externally in it, but we say that the body and communion of the true church must be distinguished from all sect, who call themselves church. The marks by which the true church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin (*Belgic Confession* Article 27; see Addendum 1).

Berkhof asserts that the Church has a divine task to be a witness to the truth to those who are without, and both a witness and a teacher to those that are within. The Church must exercise this power in the preservation of the Word of God, in the administration of the Word and of the sacraments, in the framing of symbols and confessions and in the cultivation of the study of

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<sup>7</sup>The *Heidelberg Catechism* Question and Answer 54

theology (Berkhof, 1949:412-415). Vorster asserts that the marks of church are identified as the correct preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, according to the lord's institution and the proper administration of discipline in the church. The marks of a church here, as identified, refer to the visible church. This is the church as it is manifested in the local congregation. In the RCEA context, the church is seen as a fellowship. This is referred to as *ushirika*, a Swahili word that is used to refer to fellowship or coming together for a spiritual purpose. The RCEA uses this term to refer to congregations that constitute the Synod. The local church has all the responsibility that embodies the reign of God and everything that represents the Kingdom. The local church reveals and promotes the reign of God in all its beauty and splendour (Vorster, 2003:8). Coertzen emphasis that the church is not equivalent to the Kingdom of God, though there is a very close connection between it and the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is far superior in as far as it's redeeming work of fulfilment and accomplishment in Christ is concerned (Coertzen, 2004:81). The church as a sign of the Kingdom should not be equated with the Kingdom of God. The leadership of a church are no replacements of Jesus Christ (Coertzen, 2004:98-99).

This is fundamental for the governance of the church. It should guard against some individuals who are tempted to usurp the role of Christ and arrogate themselves the authority and power of the true and the only leader of the church Jesus Christ who ransomed the church with His own life. Christ uses the Word to govern His church (Coertzen, 2004:98).

Christ does not rule His church by force, but subjectively through His Holy Spirit, who is operative in the church, and objectively through the Word of God as standard authority Berkhof (1962:185). All believers are bound to obey the Word of the King and submit to His authority. His is the only word that is law and absolute for the church Coertzen (2004:99). Christ uses the service of His people to lead the church. These leaders are only tools in the master's hand to service. They have no power and authority other than the one delegated to them by the Lord of the church – Jesus Christ. The honour for the work does not belong to them (leaders), but to Jesus Christ Himself. Those given the responsibility to execute the government of Jesus Christ are to do so in the truth that they are serving on behalf of Jesus Christ. Christ's government of the church must be expressed and realized in any formulation that a church takes in its church order. Those given the

responsibility to serve the church do not exercise the authority and power of the church, but that of Jesus Christ (De Witt, 1969:69). From the foregoing, it is important that a reformed church order must take notice of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992* has placed authority in the hands of the office-bearers instead of in Jesus Christ.

DeMoor (2010:13) holds that the church is the Spirit-led community of those chosen in Christ to be God's people in his world, but it is also a human institution fully embedded in all aspects of created reality. Reformed church orders, for example, have always spoken of office-bearers as more than mere functionaries in congregational life: they are Christ-representatives who lead God's people in their mission as pilgrims sent to bring good news (apostolicity) (DeMoor, 2010:13).

This is further affirmed in Article 7 of the *Belgic Confession*:

'Therefore, we must not consider human writings, no matter how holy their authors may have been equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom nor the majority nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor council, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else. For all human beings are liars by nature and more vain than vanity itself, therefore we reject with all our heart everything that does not agree with this infallible rule, as we are taught to do by the apostles when they say "test the spirits to see if they are of God, and also if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house".<sup>8</sup> And He is before all things and Him all things consist and He is the Head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have pre-eminence'' (Article 7 of the *Belgic Confession*; see Addendum 1).

This passage refers to Jesus Christ as the Head of the body, the church. He is not only the head of the church but also the head of the entire creation. He is therefore the head of all authorities and powers. Christ stands over all, having triumphed even over the spiritual principalities and powers. Christ is here declared and proclaimed the head of the body of the church (Giles, 1995:126). Calvin recognized only the invisible headship of Christ, and rejected the papal claim to world-dominion as an anti-Christian usurpation (Schaff, 1882:337).

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<sup>8</sup> CRC Publications, ecumenical creeds and reformed confessions, Grand Rapids.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ over the church, and indeed over the whole world, is of central importance to the government of the church today, as it has always been. The concentration on Jesus as the head of the church ensures that the church stays within the cause that God had ordained it for, from the very beginning to the end of time (Vorster, 2003:10). All authority in the church is therefore received from Christ, the only Head of the church. The church is called into existence through the Word and Spirit. Christ exercises dominion over His church by His Word and Spirit (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:36; Coertzen, 2004:98). The Bible teaches that Christ is the head of all things. He is the Lord of the universe, not merely as the second person of the Trinity (Berkhof, 1939:582). Christ does not rule His church by force, but subjectively through His Holy Spirit, who is operative in the church, and objectively through the Word of God as standard authority (Berkhof, 1962:185). Christ is the only Legislator of the Church and entrusted ecclesiastical authority and legislative power to the offices (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:36). The church is a visible, organized body that recognizes Christ as the chief and only office-bearer of the church. Christ uses people for the leadership of his Church on earth and instituted the offices and ministries and the office-bearers of a governing body are temporary and limited. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:36) observes that Christ delegates the authority exercised by those holding office in the church. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a joint power to be exercised by Presbyterian courts. These courts may have jurisdiction over one or many churches, but they sustain such mutual relations as to realize the idea of the unity of the Church (cf. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:3- 4). The unity of the churches in the communal confession is that Jesus is Lord and Master of the Church.

#### **2.4.2 The limited autonomy of the local congregation**

A second basic principle of the Reformed church governance is the recognition of the limited autonomy of local congregations (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:36). It is one of the fundamental principles of the reformed that the power or authority of the church does not reside in the general assembly of any church, is only secondarily, and by derivation from the assembly but it has its original seat in the consistory or session of the local church (Berkhof, 1939:584).

The Reformed system honours the autonomy of the local church (Berkhof, 1949:405). Berkhof (1949:408) refers to it as the relative autonomy of the local congregation or the representative

government of the local church. Reformed churches choose ruling elders as their representatives, and these, together with the minister(s) of the Word, form a council or consistory for the government of the local congregation (Berkhof, 1949:408).

Berkhof (1949:409) emphatically stresses that Scripture does not contain an explicit command to the effect that the local churches of a district must form an organic union. Rather Scripture represents the local churches as individual entities without any external bond of union. He admits however that the essential nature of the Church, as described in Scripture, would seem to call for such a union according to Berkhof (1949:409). He furthermore indicates that the word *ecclesia* is being used in the singular as an indication of the visible church in a wider sense than that of the purely local church ( Acts 9:31 I Cor. 12:28, I Cor. 10:32; I Cor. 12:12-50; Eph. 4:4-16; Acts 15; Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17, Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1,2; Tit. 1:5,7; I Cor. 12:28; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7,17,24; I Pet. 5:1; Acts 1:21-26; 6:1-6; 14:23; Matt. 16:19; John 20:22,23; Acts 1:24,26; 20:28; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11,12; Heb. 13:17). These elders do not derive their authority from the people, but from the Lord of the Church and are responsible to Him (Berkhof, 1949:408; 409). According to Berkhof relative autonomy of the local congregation means:

- a) That every local church is a complete church of Christ, fully equipped with everything that is required for its government.
- b) That there may be no union, which destroys the autonomy of the local church.
- c) That the authority and prerogatives of the major assemblies are not unlimited, but have their limitation in the rights of the sessions or consistories. They are not permitted to lord it over a local church or its members, irrespective of the constitutional rights of the consistory; or to meddle with the internal affairs of a local church under any and all circumstances. When churches affiliate, their mutual rights and duties are circumscribed in a Church Order or Form of Government. This stipulates the rights and duties of the major assemblies, but also guarantees the rights of the local church.
- d) That the autonomy of the local church has its limitations in the relation in which it stands to the churches with which it is affiliated, and in the general interests of the affiliated churches. (Berkhof, 1949:409-410).

The authority of the local congregations is restricted by a common confession and church order. The voluntary association of a number of believers organizes the local congregation (c.f. Plaatjies-

Van Huffel, 2014:36; Punchard, 1844:29; 47-69; Golverdingen, 2001:51). A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA States* 1881:3- 4).

Article 28 (of the *Church Order of Dordt* states that the body of Christ manifests itself locally:

Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, to help the ministers, elders and deacons in all existing need and to protect them by their good order, all ministers, elders, and deacons are duty bound diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect they owe the magistrates. All ecclesiastical persons shall set a good example to the congregation in this, and by proper respect and correspondence seek to awaken and maintain the favour of the government, toward the churches to the end that each one on each side doing his duty in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and good unity be maintained for the welfare of the churches.

Reformed church polity recognizes the right of every other church or association of particular churches, to establish its form of polity and terms of communion for itself, and recommends all to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:36). The local congregation consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of government (2014:37). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) explains that membership in the church is voluntary. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) adds that one is not forced to become a member, nor is one compelled to remain a member. The principle of the limited autonomy of the local church goes back to the very beginning of the history of the Reformed churches. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) argues that each local congregation is autonomous with the right of self-governance, but is restricted in that the local churches cannot stand on its own, but must unite based on their confession. In the Presbyterian-synodical system, congregations are always in relation to each other (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:37). Failure to maintain the principle of the limited autonomy of the local congregation leads to hierarchy (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:37). Both Presbyterian Church polity experts and Reformed Church polity experts affirm that

ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is twofold of nature, namely the offices exercised in the preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and comforting the afflicted, which is the power of order; and they exercise it sometimes jointly in ecclesiastical assemblies, (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:3- 4; Berkhof, 1939:584-587).

The strong emphasis lays on the autonomy of the local church. Golverdingen (2001:37-38) states that each local church is *ecclesia completa* (the complete autonomy of the local church). There is no *pars completa* (churches that are partly dependent on another church for their governance). Article 84 of the *Church Order of Dordt* states clearly that no church should rule over another church (“No church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.”) (Article 84 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). In this article, the independence and autonomy of the local congregation is being expressed. It is a fundamental Reformed Church polity principle, which originally formed part of Article 31 of the *Belgic Confession*:

### **Article 31: The Officers of the Church**

We believe that ministers of the Word of God, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by a legitimate election of the church, with prayer in the name of the Lord, and in good order, as the Word of God teaches. So all must be careful not to push themselves forward improperly, but must wait for God’s call, so that they may be assured of a divine calling and be certain that they are chosen by the Lord. As for the ministers of the Word, they all have the same power and authority, no matter where they may be, since they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church. Moreover, to keep God’s holy order from being violated or despised, we say that everyone ought, as much as possible, to hold the ministers of the Word and elders of the church in special esteem, because of the work they do, and be at peace with them, without grumbling, quarrelling, or fighting (Article 31 *Belgic Confession*; see Addendum 1).

This article originally surfaced in the Church Order of the Synod of Emden (1571) as the French Church Order of 1559 and in the Articles of the Convent to Wesel in 1568. The article came as



Article 84 back into the *Church Order of Dordt*. The article is the cornerstone of Reformed church polity (Golverdingen, 2001:52). Article 84 emphasises the equality between the ministers and the ecclesiastical assemblies. Article 84 rejects any hierarchy, maintains the autonomy of local congregation. After discussion and voting all churches are equally bound by the decision of major assemblies (Golverdingen, 2001:53). Article 84 says nothing about an autonomous power of the major assemblies to be deposit on minor assemblies. The article closes all hierarchy (Golverdingen, 2001:53). Article 84 applies to the local congregation and the ministers of the Word. Who in this article derives the absolute autonomy of the local church, also teaches the absolute autonomy of each official (Golverdingen, 2001:53). Article 84 however states clearly that no one may indeed have dominion over another. Likewise, the article rules out that the dominion of one church over another, since all churches have equal power and authority (Golverdingen, 2001:53).

Article 36 of the *Church Order of Dordt* also states that the classis has the same authority over the consistory that the particular synod has over the classis and the general synod over the particular (Article 36 *Church Order of Dordt*). This article states: “The same say, the classis of the church, which has the Synod on the classis, and the General Synod over the Particular.” Whilst Article 84 of *Church Order of Dordt* attends to the power of management or governing power, Article 36 attends to conduct. The decisions of major assemblies are settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order:

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he may appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly and that which is decided by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles adopted in this general synod as long as these are not changed by another general synod.

Article 36 makes a fundamental difference between the authority of the local congregation and the major assemblies (Golverdingen, 2001:54). Rather article 36 makes a fundamental distinction between the authority of the local congregation and the major assemblies. The major assemblies do not have the same authority as the local congregation. Voetius already strongly condemned supreme consistory or *senatus ecclesiasticus* (Golverdingen, 2001:55). Article 36 provides a



ranking of the church meetings, which are coated with authoritative power: consistories, classes and synods. The authority of the church on the town is complete. Authority can never be transferred to the classes and synods. The authority of the major assemblies is delegated and limited. It is based on the intermediary by mutual agreement, as Voetius and has no direct divine nature (Golverdingen, 2001:55). The power flows from Christ in the church councils, from the church councils in the presbytery and the classis in the Synod and not vice versa. The local congregation is the only ecclesiastical assembly, which has all the power that Christ vested in the church.

The local congregation is, however, a complete church, *ecclesia completa*, and is thus in principle independent of other congregations or churches (c.f. Bouwman, 2000:19). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) adds that the local congregation is, in itself, a complete manifestation of the body of Christ and is subject to Christ the Head of the church (Matt. 16:18-19). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) agrees with Bouwman (c.f. Bouwman, 1928:70) that the church is the visible representation of the kingdom of God, living according to the laws of Christ. The authority that Christ, as Head of his church, gives to his church resides in the church council. Ecclesiastical power in the local congregation is exercised through the offices (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:37). The church council, also called consistories or sessions, as the visible representative government of God's kingdom, has general oversight of the local congregation in the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:37). Reformed churches are governed by judicatories usually composed of ministers of the Word, elders and deacons.

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:37) points out the fact that Calvin vests the self-government in the Christian congregation, and regards all the ministers of the Word, in their official character, as ambassadors and representatives of Christ. All the offices in the church are ordained by Christ who rules the congregation through the special offices in the church (Matt. 16:13-19, 18:15-20, John 20:21-23). These office-bearers form the church council (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:37). Christ provides power to His church. Nevertheless, He at the same time has provided for it; that this power shall be exercised in a specific and special way. This is done through representative organs of the church that are set in order to safeguard the doctrine, worship and discipline. The officers

of the church, who represent the people, are elected by the people themselves through a popular vote (Berkhof, 1962:187). This does not mean that they receive their authority from the people, but that their authority comes from the Lord of the church, Christ. The people in the church will call them, but the inner call will be from the Lord of the church; they are therefore ultimately responsible to Him in the final analysis. They are merely representatives and act on behalf of the Lord. They are most of all, duty-bound to recognize the power vested in the church as a whole by seeking its consent in the important matters (Berkhof, 1962:188). The authority of all office-bearers is based on the authority of the Word and therefore ultimately on Christ (Coertzen, 2004:101). When the office-bearers act without this authority, their leadership becomes illegitimate and irrelevant. For Calvin, the church has to be managed according to the order that the Lord wills and has given through His Word.

The Reformed church governance system maintains the right and duty of the local church to unite with other similar churches on a common confessional basis, and form a wider organization for doctrinal, judicial, and administrative purposes, with proper stipulations of mutual obligations and rights (Berkhof, 1949:405). Hodge is of the opinion that the Church had the right to set forth a public declaration of the truths, which she believes, and which are to be acknowledged by all who enter her communion. The Church therefore has the right to frame creeds or confessions of faith, as her testimony for the truth, and her protest against error (Hodge, 1855:8). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Reformed churches composed a number of Reformed confessions, which distinguished the Reformed faith not only from Roman Catholicism but also from the other branches of the Protestant Reformation churches. Among these confessions are the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618-1619). These three, often referred to as the Three Forms of Unity, constitute the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The Forms of Unity is a summary of what Reformed churches with origins in the European continent believe and is based on the Bible. For example, these confessions are included in the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN as well as the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

### 2.4.3 The denominational ties serve the well-being of the Church

According to the *Church Order of Dordt*, there are four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies namely the consistory, the classical meetings, the particular synods, and the general or national (synod) only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only that shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor [assemblies], or that which concerns the churches of the major assembly in common (Article 30 *Church Order of Dordt 1619* see Addendum 3). The churches may enter into an agreement in accordance with the stipulations in the Church Order with other churches to help each other and to help, but cannot transfer the duties.

The notion that no Reformed congregation stands by it-self is also one of the fundamental principles of Reformed church polity (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:38). In a Reformed tradition, a very close bond exists among churches (c.f. Van Dellen & Monsma, 1967:26). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) points out that the unity of the church is expressed in mutual relationships. The church is divided into many separate congregations, which require mutual counsel and assistance in order to preserve the soundness of doctrine, the regularity of discipline, and the prevention of infidelity, error and immorality (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:38). She furthermore argues that the churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily manifest their unity by means of a common confession and church order.

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) argues that there is a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation. Among churches belonging to the federation, three assemblies are recognized: the Church Council (Session), the Presbytery and the Synod (2014:38).

In a Presbyterian/Reformed church governance system, these autonomous congregations unite into a federation of churches. This is an important Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principal. Hanko (1962:6) adds that this federation of churches is not something optional for the local congregation. Rather the local congregation is obligated to belong to such a federation “by the solemn injunction of Christ to express the unity of the body of Christ in the institutional form of the church”. Hanko (1962:6). According to Hanko, these congregations are called to express that

unity in a common confession and are called to labour together in the works of the kingdom (1962:6). Within this federation of churches (bond of churches). Each congregation remains autonomous (1962:6).

In a Reformed/Presbyterian church governance system the power of the major assemblies are clearly defined by the church order. Hanks (1962:6) asserts these powers are given to the broader assemblies by the local congregations and the local congregations alone may perform the true work of the church: the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline (Hanks, 1962:6). The bond of churches is a matter of a voluntary act of free churches in accordance with what Holy Scripture states concerning the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace to be maintained. The bond of churches agrees to do certain things in the same way; to support each other in several respects; to have mutual supervision over each other; to create a certain form of jurisdiction in their midst and to undertake a number of common activities, e.g. regarding the training for the ministry of the Word.

In the *Book of Church Order PCUSA* the following is indicated as characteristics of the jurisdiction exercised in a Presbyterian Church governance system

- a) the Session exercises jurisdiction over a single church,
- b) the Presbytery over what is common to the ministers of the Word, Sessions and churches within a prescribed resort,
- c) the Synod over what belongs in common to three or more Presbyteries, and their Ministers of the Word, Sessions and churches
- d) and the General Assembly over such matters as concern the whole Church; and the jurisdiction of these courts is limited by the express provisions of the constitution (*Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:17).

According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) the word ‘federation’ has as its main component in Latin word *foedus*, meaning ‘covenant’. Federation is a covenant among these churches. Entrance into, remaining in and departure from a federative relationship is strictly a voluntary matter (c.f. Van Oene,<sup>9</sup> 1990:3). Golverdingen (2001:37) asserts that the voluntary confederative character of

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<sup>9</sup> W. W. J. Van Oene is a minister of the Word of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

the federation does not mean permissiveness. In Reformed Church polity, independentism is being dismissed. Rather Reformed Church polity emphasises that the local churches should act in relation to each other. The local church, should not remain isolated because is only one manifestation of the Church of Christ in one single place. Churches are therefore obliged to correspondence with other churches within their bounds. The federation is a confederation of independent local congregations that have joined voluntarily to cooperate (Golverdingen, 2001:37).

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) reminds us that no church can or may be compelled to take the step to join a federation, nor can a church be prevented from breaking with the federation. She also states categorically that federative relationships do not belong to the essence or being of the church. It rather serves the well-being of the church. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) is of the opinion that federative relationships are appropriate for the proper ecclesial community and for mutual edification. The several neighbouring congregations are not independent entities. Rather they are united under a federation and within a federation of churches; each congregation has a limited autonomy. For Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38), the federation serves to prevent both hierarchy and independent church governance. It is there only to help, not to take matters out of the hands of the minor assemblies. A congregation may through its church council withdraw from the federation at any time (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:38). Voluntary consent is not only a basis, but that it is a prerequisite for the establishment and practice of the federation. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:38) warns that it is out of order for a congregation to withdraw from the presbytery without first obtaining the consent of the presbytery.

#### **2.4.4 The restricted power and responsibilities of ecclesial assemblies**

Reformed Church government is characterized by a system of ecclesiastical assemblies namely the consistory (session), the classis (presbytery), the synod(s), and (in some cases) the general assembly (Berkhof, 1949:408). The consistory (session) consists of the minister (or, ministers) of the Word and the elders of the local church. The classis is composed of one minister of the Word and one elder of each local church within a certain district. The synod, again, consists of an equal number of ministers and elders from each classis or presbytery. In the case of the Presbyterian Church governance, system the general assembly is composed of an equal delegation of ministers

of the Word and elders from each of the presbyteries, and not, as might be expected, from each of the particular synods (Berkhof, 1949:408). In major assemblies, its delegates will represent the church. In these assemblies, only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only that shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor [assemblies], or that which concerns the churches of the major assembly in common (Article 30 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*). Only the delegated is entitled to vote (Article 33 *Church Order of Dordt 1619* see Addendum 3).

According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:39), Reformed Church polity is based on the interdependence of governing bodies. A fourth fundamental principle of Reformed Church polity is that the executive, legislative and judicial power in the Church is bestowed in both the minor and major assemblies. The term 'classis' denotes this meeting of churches-in-relative-proximity. (A secondary use of the term 'classis' denotes the geographic area in which the churches-that-meet-in-classis is located). The agendas of classes should be comprised of those matters of local concern that the local churches could not finalise on their own. According to Bouwman (2000:70) major assemblies are not *higher* assemblies with more authority, but *broader* assemblies with *no* God-given authority. It was only to the most minor assembly, the consistory that the Lord Jesus Christ assigned authority of their own (Bouwman, 2000:70). The rights of the local congregation cannot be by-passed nor usurped by a major assembly (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:39). There are four degrees of courts in the Presbyterian/Reformed churches, namely the church council, the presbytery, the synod and the general synod. Church councils are permanent bodies while presbyteries and synods are temporary. The church council (minor assembly) is composed of the teaching and ruling presbyters of a particular church. In the major assemblies are therefore delegates, ambassadors of the local churches together. This is emphatically illustrated by the presentation of the credential letters in accordance with Article 33 of the *Church Order of Dordt* ("Those delegated to the assemblies shall bring along their credentials and instructions, signed by those who delegated them. Only those [delegated] shall be entitled to vote." (Article 33 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*). In the major assemblies, delegates are the ambassadors of the local churches together. The major assemblies derive their power from their delegation (Golverdingen, 2001:37). The power enshrined in the major assemblies does not deprive the minor assemblies of its rights. Rather in the major assemblies, their power comes together (cumulative or

accumulative power). It is a derivative power, which is not normally practiced over and beyond the local congregation, except in communal affairs, for example in the case of appeal or mismanagement. The authority of the several meetings can be described as twinned power. Members of the federation have a certain control over each other, but they do not rob each other of everyone's independence (Golverdingen, 2001:52).

The power of major assemblies is therefore delegated, limited, incidental, derivative, "lower" and distinct from the power of the local congregation (Golverdingen, 2001:37). The decisions taken by major meetings are mandatory for all congregations, but with the proviso that is expressed in Art. 31 of the *Church Order of Dordt*: "If anyone complains that he has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he may appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly and that which is decided by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles adopted in this general synod as long as these are not changed by another general synod." (Article 31 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 see Addendum 3). The major assemblies are not a higher government, which may exercise control over all the congregations, church councils, presbyteries. The major assemblies rather have the same power as the local church (Golverdingen, 2001:37).

The power of the major assemblies has a representative character. Not the local churches, but the classes or presbyteries, send their representatives to Synods (Berkhof, 1949:410). Only ecclesiastical matters fall under the jurisdiction of the major assemblies. Berkhof furthermore states that major assemblies deal with (a) matters which, as to their nature, belong to the province of a minor assembly, but for some reason or other cannot be settled there; and (b) matters which, as to their nature, belong to the province of a major assembly, since they pertain to the churches in general, such as matters touching the Confession, the Church Order, or the liturgy of the Church (1949:410). "The major assemblies do not represent a higher kind of power than is vested in the consistory or session. The Reformed churches know of no higher kind of ecclesiastical power than that which resides in the consistory." (1949:410).

The authority of the major assemblies is greater in degree and wider in extent than that of the consistory. Berkhof emphasise that the decisions of a major assembly carry great weight and can



never be set aside at will. “These decisions are authoritative, except in cases where they are explicitly declared to be merely advisory. They are binding on the churches as the sound interpretation and application of the law, — the law of Christ, the King of the Church. They cease to be binding only when they are shown to be contrary to the Word of God.” (Berkhof, 1949:410). Presbyteries are conventions of an equal delegation of the ministers of the Word and church council members within a larger area; a synod is composed of several presbyteries in a geographical area and is the intermediate governmental unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its region (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:38).

The synod exercises limited supervisory authority over both presbyteries and congregations. In a Presbyterian Church governance system the major assemblies attend to appeals, complaints and references brought before it in an orderly manner; examine and license candidates for ministry; receive, dismiss, ordain, install, remove and judge office-bearers; review the records of the sessions, redress whatever they may have done contrary to order, and take effectual care that minor assemblies observe the constitution of the church; establish the pastoral relation, and dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or where the interests of religion imperatively demand (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA 1881:17*). The General Synod represents in one body all the churches in this system (*Book of Church Order PCUSA 1881:24*).

The General Synod is the highest judicatory of the Reformed Church and exercise an appellate supervisory power over the acts, proceedings, and decisions of the minor assemblies (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2014:38). In a Presbyterian Church governance system the General Synod have power to receive and issue all appeals, references and complaints regularly brought before it from the inferior courts; to bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline; to give its advice and instruction in conformity with the Constitution in all cases submitted to it; to review the records of the Synods; to take care that the minor assemblies observe the Constitution (*Book of Church Order PCUSA 1881:25*).

Member churches meet together in major assemblies (Presbyteries and Synods) to manifest ecclesiastical unity. Major assemblies are composed of delegates from churches in a certain region



(Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:39). The power of the major assemblies is delegated (*potesta delegata* (2014:39)). The authority of church councils on the other hand is original. Major assemblies preside over minor assemblies, or determine matters of controversy, which arise therein (2014:38). She emphasise that in all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, only in an ecclesiastical manner.

Furthermore Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:39) cautions that the term ‘major’ is the equivalent of ‘broader’ and does not indicate a higher rank. The term ‘major’ or ‘broader’ indicates rather that in an assembly more churches are represented than at the ‘minor’ assembly. Major assemblies are therefore not super-consistories and the term ‘minor assembly’ does not imply a lower rank (Van Oene, 1990:132). Although ecclesiastical assembly exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters belonging to it, the minor assemblies are subject to the control of the major assemblies. These ecclesiastical assemblies are not separate and independent tribunals; but they have a mutual relation, and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole Church, performed by it through the appropriate organ. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:39) adds that the duties and powers of the major assemblies are limited to the agreement among the churches in the federation.

The churches joined voluntarily in a federation. They can only exercise power over each other to the extent that those in power voluntarily agreed. Major assemblies have power only over local churches under and in so far as, it is enshrined in the Church Order. Delegates have only delegated power, which the churches have granted them. The church order is the foundation of the mutual power over each other and determines the limits of that power (Golverdingen, 2001:51).

In most Reformed churches, e.g., the general assembly or synod does not have magisterial authority (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:40). She points out that while governing bodies have certain authority, power, and the provisions of the church order and Scripture limit responsibility, authority and power. A major assembly shall deal ordinarily with those matters which concern its churches in common or which could not be finished in the minor assemblies. Ordinarily, a major assembly would therefore not be allowed to declare a matter admissible if it could have been accomplished in a lower assembly (2014:40). It is the opinion of Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) that major assemblies must concentrate on those issues, which are common to all congregations

within their purview. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) cautions that failure to recognize the authority of the major assemblies leads to an independent form of church governance.

Major assemblies do not constitute a permanent institution that is higher in rank than and has authority over the churches that are represented at it, or over the constituent minor assemblies (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:40). Major assemblies are deliberative in character (2014:40). The delegates do not represent the interests of their individual congregations, but represent rather the congregations of a certain region as a whole. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) highlights that this principle guards against congregationalism. According to Article 32 of the *Church Order of Dordt* all ministers of the Word have the same power and authority, local churches make their own ordinances' adopted by voluntary consent, there is no higher power of governance; nothing is forced from above: "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons." (Article 84 *Church Order of Dordt 1619* see Addendum 3).

The major assemblies derive their power and authority to the minor assemblies. The right to come together in meetings is being derived from Matt. 18: 15-17, Acts. 15, 2 Cor. 8: 1, 4, 19, and Rom. 15:26. The power of the major assemblies is lesser than that of the local congregation. According to Berkhof it is one of the fundamental principles of Reformed or Presbyterian government, that the power or authority of the Church does not reside first of all in the most general assembly of any Church, and is only secondarily and by derivation from this assembly, vested in the governing body of the local Church; but that it has its original seat in the consistory or session of the local Church, and is by this transferred to the major assemblies, such as classes (presbyteries) and synods or general assemblies (Berkhof, 1949:405).

#### **2.4.5 The necessity and nature of Christian discipline**

All Church power is ministerial and administrative (Hodge, 1955: 7). The *potestas gubernan* is divided into the *potestas ordinans* and the *potestas iudicans*. The *potestas ordinans* refers to that in the Church "all things be done decently and in order," (I Cor. 14:33; 40). The regulative authority which He has given to the Church includes the power to enforce the laws of Christ (II Cor. 1:24; I Pet. 5:2,3) to draw up canons or church orders John 4:23; I Cor. 11:17-33; 14:40; 16:2;

Col. 3:16; I Tim. 3:1-13). The *potestas iudicans* is the power that is exercised to guard the holiness of the Church, by admitting those who are approved after examination, and by excluding those who depart from the truth or lead dishonourable lives. It is exercised especially in matters of discipline (Berkhof, 1949:415). Scriptural teachings respecting discipline (Ezek. 44:9; Ezra 10:8; Luke 6:22; John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2; Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; I Cor. 5:2,7,13; II Cor. 2:5-7; II Thess. 3:14,15; I Tim. 1:20; Tit. 3:10; I Cor. 5:5 and I Tim. 1:20).

In a Presbyterian Church governance system, all baptized persons, being members of the Church, are subject to discipline (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:47). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) points out to exercise discipline is another fundamental principle of Reformed church polity. Discipline is the exercise of that authority, and the appreciation of that system of laws, which the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed in His Church. In a Presbyterian church governance system discipline has two senses, the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control, which the Church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts; the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial prosecution (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:47).

Christ commits ecclesiastical power to the church as a whole, that is, to the ordinary members and to the officers alike; but to the officers an additional measure is given, as required for the performance of their respective duties in the church of Christ (Berkhof, 1962:188). The wielding of a ministerial and declarative power by the church is in a manner that the reformers spoke of the keys given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ. These keys are spiritual in nature and have to do with the proclamation of the Gospel and the censure of the delinquent and the impertinent. Jesus entrusted to the church the keys which open and close the Kingdom of God, namely, the power to bind and to dissolve, to forgive sin and to hold the sinner accountable (Matthew 18:15-20) (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:40).

The phrase “the Kingdom of God” refers to the reign of God. The reign of God over the earth, or rather the world is a present reality that is proclaimed by both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament proclaims the reign of God over the whole creation. In the New Testament, this reign is manifested in the coming of Jesus of Jesus Christ and the formation of God’s people. For

Küng (1992), the Kingdom of God is both a present reality and a future reality. This reality of the Kingdom of God has already come in the coming of Jesus Christ, but will also be fully realized and revealed in its majestic completeness in the end of time (Küng, 1992:56). According to Küng, the foundations of the church are part of the eschatological expectation of the coming kingdom of God. He refers to a variety of vital images of the church, including the church as the People of God, the church as the Creation of the Spirit, and the church as the Body of Christ (1992:105-260). The whole history of the covenant between God and His people and Israel is a historical reality of this reign, the reign of God. The reign of God is realized in the coming of Jesus Christ. The same reign is also realized in the gathering of the community that is founded on the work of Jesus Christ. The church is the universal body of Jesus Christ. This is manifested in the local church or congregation, which in turn has all the attributes of the Kingdom of God.

The local church embodies the reign of God and everything that represents the Kingdom. The local church reveals and promotes the reign of God in all its beauty and splendour (Vorster, 2003:8). The essence of the church in this understanding is subservient to the Kingdom and every aspect of church life is determined by this fact. The polity of the church then determines the way and the direction and extent this subservience should be arranged. Church polity is designed to promote this subservience of the church in the kingdom. The Reformed concept of the Kingdom can be seen as a paradigm of Reformed church polity (Vorster, 2003:9). The underpinning principles of the Kingdom of God are an orderly church government. These are:

- a) Christ is the King of the Kingdom and the Head of the people of God, the church (Mathew 16:18; I Corinthians 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:22).
- b) The Kingdom becomes visible in the obedience of people to the Word and Spirit.
- c) The church, as the people of God, is the fruit of faithful obedience to God as he reveals Himself in his Word.
- d) The church exists for the honour of God and the coming of the Kingdom. The church is functional and not an end in itself. The church refers primarily to the local church (Vorster, 2003:10).

The church is a sign of the Kingdom concerned (Coertzen, 2004:81. In formulating a church order for a church, it is important to take cognisance of the fact of that, the church is a sign of the

Kingdom of God as a key element in its formulation. The heart of Reformed church polity lies therein that church polity does not serve the best interests of just one or a few (as is the case in Episcopal church government), but serves the pastoral purpose of ensuring that the congregation grows in Christ Bouwman states (2000:29).

In a Reformed/Presbyterian church governance system in the local church the elders are to carry out the office that Jesus Christ has laid on their shoulders, namely, exercising the two keys of the kingdom of heaven namely preaching and church discipline (c.f. Matthew 18:17; Ephesians 4:1) (Bouwman, 2000:29). Discipline entails the exercise of authority by the church over its members, officers and judicatories (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:40). The session (church council) is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church and to censure those found delinquent (*Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:17). Furthermore, every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general, to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices, which tend to the injury of the peace, purity or progress of the Church (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:17).

According to Berkhof the purpose of discipline in the Church is twofold. ‘In the first place it seeks to carry into effect the law of Christ concerning the admission and exclusion of members; and in the second place it aims at promoting the spiritual edification of the members of the Church by securing their obedience to the laws of Christ’ (Berkhof, 1949:416). Berkhof’s assumption is that the consistory should not even wait until someone calls attention to such sins, but should take the initiative. He furthermore emphasis that in the case of public sins the consistory has no right to wait until someone brings formal charges; neither has it the right to demand of anyone who finally feels constrained to call attention to such sins that he admonish the sinner privately first. He concludes by saying that the matter of public sins cannot be settled in private (1949:417).

The disciplinary action of the consistory passes through three stages: (a) The *excommunicatio minor*, restraining the sinner from partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This is not public, and is followed by repeated admonitions by the consistory, in order to bring the sinner to repentance. (b) If the preceding measure does not avail, it is followed by three public announcements and admonitions. In the first of these, the sin is mentioned, but the sinner is not named. Secondly, the

name is made known in accordance with the advice of classis, which must first be obtained. Lastly, the imminent final excommunication is announced, in order that this may have the consent of the congregation. During all this time the consistory, of course, continues its admonitions. (c) Finally, this is followed by the *excommunicatio major*, by which one is cut off from the fellowship of the Church, Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:13; Tit. 3:10, 11. It is always possible to reinstate the sinner, if he shows due repentance and confesses his sins, II Cor. 2:5-10 (Berkhof, 1949:417). Numerous references of the necessity of proper discipline occur in Scripture *inter alia* Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:2,9-13; II Cor. 2:5-10; II Thess. 3:6,14,15; Tit. 3:10,11; Rev. 2:2, Rev. 2:14,20,24. Reformed churches strongly stressed the fact that the Church of Christ must have an independent government and discipline. The Lutheran Churches leave the exercise of Church discipline in the strict sense of the word in the hands of the government. The latter retains the right to exercise discipline only by means of the ministry of the Word that is, by admonitions and exhortations addressed to the church as a whole.

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) points out that the end of discipline is the maintenance of the truth, the vindication of the authority and honour of Christ; the removal of offences; the promotion of the purity and edification of the Church and the spiritual good of offenders. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) argues that the purpose of admonition and discipline is the salvation of the penitent, to restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation and to maintain the unity, the purity and holiness of the church of Christ. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:40) continues to explain that the censures to be administered by the church council are admonition, rebuke, suspension or deposition from office, suspension from the communion of the church, and, in the case of offenders who will not be reclaimed by milder measures, excommunication (c.f. *Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV Chapter 2.1).

Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by an ecclesiastical assembly, also known as a church court. Suspension, with respect to church members, is their temporary exclusion from sealing ordinances; with respect to church officers-bearers, it is their temporary exclusion from the exercise of their office. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration. Definite suspension is administered when the credit of religion, the honour of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it. Indefinite suspension is the exclusion of an offender from sealing ordinances, or from

office, until he/she exhibit signs of repentance, or until, by his/her conduct, the necessity of the highest censure be made manifest. Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church because of gross sin or heresy.

In a Presbyterian church governance system the deposition is the degradation of an officer from his/her office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA 1881:50-51*). The discipline exercised in the church concerns both doctrine and conduct. Moreover, discipline is to be exercised jointly by ministers of the Word and elders with the consent of the whole congregation (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:41). The ends of discipline in a Presbyterian church governance system includes rebuke- of offences, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honour of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA 1881:47*).

#### **2.4.6 Right of Appeal**

Article 31 of the *Church Order of Dordt* makes provision for the right to appeal. If anyone complains that he/she has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he/she may appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly and that which is decided by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles adopted in this general synod as long as these are not changed by another general synod (Article 31 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*). The principle of Article 31 defends that the power of synods are derived and delegated coercive power. However, synod's decisions may not conflict with the Word of God or the church order. Therefore, this article limits the power of synods. One can indeed go in appeal against a decision of the minor assembly at major assemblies (Golverdingen, 2001:57). A sixth foundational principle of Reformed church polity according to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) is the right of appeal. An appeal is an investigation to ascertain whether a minor assembly erred in its decision.

In a Presbyterian church governance system the Synod has power to receive and issue all appeals, complaints, and references, regularly brought up from the Presbyteries; to review the records of the Presbyteries, and redress whatever they may have done contrary to order; to take effectual care



that they observe the Constitution of the Church, and that they obey the lawful injunctions of the higher courts; to erect new Presbyteries, (*Book of Church Order Presbyterian Church in the United States* 1881:17). An appeal refers in a Presbyterian church governance system to the removal of a cause, already decided, from a minor assembly to a major assembly (c.f. *Book of Church Order Presbyterian Church in the United States* 1881:79). The decisions of such assemblies Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) argues are settled and binding among the churches unless they are contrary to Scripture, the Reformed confessions, or the adopted church order (*Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV Chapter 8, 9, 10). If anyone complains that he or she has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, or that an injustice has been made during the hearing, or the decision of a minor assembly was incorrect or faulty, he or she has the right to appeal to the major assembly (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2014:41).

Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the church order (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2014:41). The church according to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) has a right to receive, hear, resolve and decide references, appeals and complaints, including questions of doctrine or discipline, following constitutional procedures, and to advise and to assume original jurisdiction for adjudication on matters from church sessions where their authority cannot be exercised. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) adds that all proceedings of the church council, the presbytery, and the synod are subject to review by, and may be taken to, a superior judicatory, by general review and control, reference, complaint, or appeal. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) indicates that the majority governs and consequently appeals may be referred from lower to higher judicatories, till they are finally decided by the collected wisdom and united voice of the entire Church. References by any judicatories are to be made to the judicatory immediately superior. In a Presbyterian church governance system when a judicatory makes a reference, it ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced, and in perfect readiness, so that the superior court may be able to consider and issue the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible (*Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:78).

Minor assemblies may petition major assemblies by overture. Church councils, if convinced that they cannot comply with a decision of a major assembly because it does not agree with the Word



of God, cannot be compelled to do so according to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41). If a major assembly rejects the decision of a minor assembly, the case is referred back to congregation or presbytery. Thus, the independence of minor assembly is being recognized and respected. A major assembly cannot nullify a decision of a minor assembly. The nature of the reformed church federation is characterized by a hard and fast rule: the major assemblies have no higher power, no *supra* (Golverdingen 2001:53). If a church council refuses to comply with the final decision of the Synod (if the matter decided upon at the major assembly has been lawfully placed before it by way of a church council's request or an appeal), the dissenting congregation is no longer eligible for membership in the federation; by common consent the churches have agreed to abide by the decisions of a major assembly (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:41).

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:41) explains that in reviewing the proceedings of a minor assembly the major assembly shall determine whether the proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the church order, if the proceedings have been prudent and equitable, and if the lawful injunctions of a major assembly have been followed. If necessary, the major assembly may direct the lower assembly to reconsider and correct an irregularity or resolve a delinquency (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:41). A decision may not be executed pending an appeal. The church council should suspend further action until a final verdict has been reached at a general synod (2014:41). The whole process must be suspended until all possibilities of appeal have been exhausted. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:42) stresses that major assemblies have the duty of oversight and the right to review and jurisdiction over minor assemblies.

Every appellant is bound to give notice of his/her intention to appeal and to lay the reasons thereof in writing. In a Presbyterian church governance system no appeal shall be carried from a minor assembly to any major assembly than the one immediately superior, without its consent (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:79). Disputed matters of doctrine and discipline may be referred to a major assembly for adjudication (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014: 42). Governing bodies of the church have no civil jurisdiction or power to impose civil penalties but they have only ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Adjudicated matters are the only areas where the major assemblies may make decisions that are settled and binding when the appellate process has been exhausted (2014: 42). Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014: 42) points out that advice and counsel of major assemblies is not

binding upon the churches unless settled by adjudication. Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014: 42) argues that the General Assembly has no right to refer the final decision of any matter affecting the doctrine of the church to an inferior judicatory. Consequently, there can be no appeal from the decision of the Assembly. Its decision is final.

#### **2.4.7 The power of the major assemblies with regard to misconduct**

Taking all the above principles into account, Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014: 43) raises the following critical questions: What happens in the case of misconduct or in cases where there are difficulties in the minor assembly of such a nature that apparently they are unable to solve? What happens if a minor assembly does not bring a matter to a major assembly? Do the major assemblies have the right to initiate action or would that necessitate hierarchy? In the case of maladministration, the power of the major assembly is greater than that of the single congregation.

Although Berkhof (1949:409-410) correctly argues that major assemblies are not permitted to lord it over a local church or its members, irrespective of the constitutional rights of the consistory; nor to meddle with the internal affairs of a local church under any and all circumstances judicatories may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions, or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground in the church; or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape discipline; or irregularity in proceedings may not be distinctly recorded by them. In the case, neglect or irregularity the next judicatory is incumbent to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter. In a Presbyterian church governance system any irregularity in the proceedings of a minor assembly; a refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; declining to receive important testimony; hurrying to a decision before the testimony is fully taken; a manifestation of prejudice in the cause; and mistake or injustice in the judgment, are proper grounds for an appeal (c.f. *Book of Church Order PCUSA* 1881:79). According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel, Voetius answered affirmatively on the question of the binding force of the synods in the case of mismanagement or gross misconduct (2014: 42). Her premise is that if the presbytery refuses to dissolve a pastoral relation in the case of misconduct, the decision may be reversed by Synod on complaint (2014:33).

## 2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher refers to numerous scholars who refer to the distinctive principles of Reformed or Presbyterian church government for example Calvin, Bouwman, Hanks, De Ridder, Johnson, Berkhof, Plaatjies-Van Huffel, et cetera. It is necessary to argue for principles of both the Reformed and Presbyterian church governance systems in this dissertation because the RCEA has been influenced by both. From the outset the Reformed churches across the globe which had been instituted by the Reformed churches in Europe gave prominence to the above mentioned principles of Reformed church governance, *inter alia* autonomy of the local churches, the confederative character of the denomination and the disciplinary power of the major assemblies.

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa's church polity had been influenced by these church polity developments in Europe. One would therefore assume that in their mission endeavours they would have emphasis Calvinistic church polity principles for example:

- a) The self-government of the church under the headship of Christ.
- b) The distinction between church and state. God in Christ is head of both church and state.
- c) Ecclesiastical discipline of all the members of the church from the greatest to the smallest to be exercised by a parliamentary court consisting of ministers of the Word and ruling elders.
- d) A consistory, or parliamentary court, consisting of elders of two classes, to exercise this discipline.
- e) The recognition and reinstitution of the New Testament ruling eldership (c.f. *Institutes of Christian Religion* Book IV. Chapter 3.x; Chapter 10.vii, xxvii-xxxiii).

One would therefore assume that the RCEA being the product of the mission endeavours of the DRC in Kenya would also embrace these principles. The researcher will use these principles as a lens through which he will interpret the church political documents of the RCEA (see chapter 4, 5, 6). The premise of the researcher is that the RCEA should take note of these distinctive principles in the drafting of their envisaged church order for example:

- a) The limited autonomy of the local congregation,
- b) The denominational ties serve the well-being of the Church,
- c) The power and responsibilities of ecclesial assemblies,
- d) The necessity and nature of Christian discipline,
- e) The right of appeal,
- f) The power of the major assemblies with regard to misconduct.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CHURCH JUDICIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PCEA**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The first European settlers arrived in 1902 in Kenya. They settled in the Uasin Gishu Plateau (Bisem 1983:14). The *Crown Land Ordinance* (1915) recognized native rights for Kenyans. During 1926, African Reserves for Kenyan tribes, which left the White Highlands, were created. The White Highlands consisted of large parts of central Kenya as well as great tracts of land in the Rift Valley and the plateaus. The colonial state introduced settlers in these regions. The state forcibly seized land and livestock. According to Githii (2009:12) the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) has approximately 4,000,000 members-with over 1,000 congregations and 310 parishes and hundreds of house fellowships. The denomination has currently 54 presbyteries, divided into 5 regions, these are the Eastern Region, Central region, Nairobi region, Mt. Kenya Region and Rift Valley Region.

This chapter will therefore attend to the socio-political context of the mission endeavors in Kenya as well as the historical background of the PCEA, African church leadership, the constitutional developments of the PCEA, and the ecumenical relations of the PCEA.

#### **3.2. Socio-political context**

The tribes in Kenya like elsewhere in East Africa – can be divided into three (language) groups: the Bantus, Nilotes and Cushites. The Cushitic-speaking peoples moved into what is now Kenya from North African territory around 2000 BC. They were hunters and gatherers, but also livestock herders and farmers. Cushites live in arid and semi-arid eastern and northeastern parts of Kenya. They reside along a very large area of land that runs from the east of Lake Turkana, stretches to the north of Kenya and through to the Indian Ocean, Cushites include the Somali, Rendile, Borana and Oromo tribes. Due to the dryness of their habitat throughout most of the year, Cushites are mainly nomadic pastoralists who keep large herds of cattle, camel, goats and sheep. Cushitic people maintain very close ties with each other and the Cushites of the neighboring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia. Kinship controls social relationships between people in a given community, governs marital customs and laws, and determines the behavior of one individual towards another.

Mbiti <sup>10</sup> (2001:1) explains that the familial kinship expresses a linkage in relationships, which in turn extend into the clan, the tribe and wider community. “This is the primary context of indigenous Africa, in rural villages, and to a large extent in the urban areas. It is interpersonal kinship, which (in theory) accompanies a person from birth to death. Each person is in the ‘we-ar’ kinship of biological, anthropological, sociological, psychological and historical realities.”

The Bantu and Nilotic peoples moved into the area from about 400 AD. The Bantu peoples came from the Nigeria and Cameroon region (in West Africa). From them, the Kikuyu, Mijikenda, Dawida, Taveta and Akamba tribes emerged. The Bantus brought new technologies, such as iron working. They were mainly farmers but they supplemented this with herding, fishing, hunting, gathering and trading their iron products with the other tribes who mainly limited themselves to hunting and gathering. By 1000 AD, those from the Iron Age throughout Kenya had replaced the techniques from the Stone Age and more sophisticated farming methods were developed. The Bantu ethnic group is the largest ethnic community in Kenya. They make up about 70 percent of the country’s population, but they occupy less than 30 percent of the land of Kenya. They live mainly in the coastal, central, western and eastern region of the country. The Kikuyu tribe forms Kenya’s largest single ethnic group. Unlike the Nilotes, rural Bantus are agriculturalists who grow much of Kenya’s cash crops, including the popular Kenya coffee, tea and other agricultural products such as maize, beans, rice and sugarcane. Communities lived together in villages, which included farm fields and animal sheds along with houses and shrines. The style of traditional houses varied from community to community. Some were round in shape, while others were rectangular. The houses generally faced the centre of the compound.

Kenyan Nilotes reside in the broad Rift Valley region of Kenya. They are comprised of three distinct groups: the River Lake Nilotes; the Luo who live along Lake Victoria and practice fishing; and the Plain Nilotes who include the Maasai, Samburu and Turkana people. The Plain Nilotes are pastoral tribes who have defied modern trends to retain most of their traditional ways of life. They mainly reside in the Rift Valley where they practice nomadic pastoralism. The Plain Nilotes roam from one part of their territory to another in resonance with the rainfall and in search of water and fresh food for their large herds. The Highland Nilotes are the Kalenjin people who live in Kenya’s

Western Highlands. Due to their geographical positioning and good climatic condition, the Kalenjin are able to practice both pastoralism and agriculture.

In Kenya, traditional ethnic groups were determined by geographical region, language and common culture. Each ethnic group had its own social and political organization with a strong sense of kinship. In traditional societies, the community took precedence over the individual. Members owed existence to one another, including both their ancestors and contemporaries. Marriage was highly valued, as were children. Mbiti indicates that whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. Therefore the individual can only say, 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am. Mbiti (2001:1) emphasises that in African understanding the person is first identified in relationships. To be a person, male or female, is to have the gift of life and to belong in relationships. The primary relationship is an interpersonal kinship bond in which one could say: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." (Mbiti, 2001:1)

### **3.3. Christian Missions in Kenya**

The first Christian contact with Kenya may have been as early as the fourth century when Ethiopian monks were reported to have visited the East African coast. Mbiti (1970:236) furthermore indicates that African peoples are deeply religious. He furthermore states that Christianity in Africa has come to peoples who are profoundly religious in their own way. The Orma prevented the expansion of Christianity from Ethiopia. Christianity's next contact with East Africa occurred as part of the Portuguese conquest of the Swahili culture on the coast. The Spanish and Portuguese had just completed the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, so Christianity first confronted Islam in Kenya in the context of crusade and *jihad* (Nthamburi, 1991:2). Nevertheless, sufficient peace was established between the foreign Christians and the local Muslims, so the first missionary work in Kenya occurred during the seventeenth century. The RCEA was constituted amidst the missional endeavours of numerous missionary agencies (Protestant and Catholic) in Kenya.

The next attempt to bring Christianity to East Africa was not until the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1844 Johann Ludwig Krapf, a German employed by the Church Missionary Society

(CMS) arrived in Mombasa. Krapf had first gone to Ethiopia, where he had been impressed with the power of the Orma and had become convinced that their conversion was the key to the evangelization of eastern Africa. Expelled from Ethiopia in 1843, Krapf came to Mombasa hoping to reach the Orma from there. As his first act of missionary service, Krapf buried his wife and infant daughter. In 1846, Johannes Rebmann joined Krapf (Nthamuri, 1991:3). Together they moved the mission fifteen miles inland to Rabai to avoid, the Muslim influences of Mombasa. Believing that evangelism was the primary task of missionaries, Krapf and Rebmann surveyed what today is eastern Kenya and north-eastern Tanzania and reported to a skeptical Europe the existence of two snow-capped mountains on the equator, Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro. They did pioneer linguistic and translation work but made few converts. Coming from shame societies rather than guilt societies and defining morality as conformity to the traditions of their ancestors, the African people could not understand the missionaries' preaching about sin, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ according to Nthamuri (1991:3).

The partition of Africa by the Berlin Conference (1884/85) had implications for the pattern that missions later followed. Missionary societies tended to respect their nation of origin, as they perceived the need to have maximum protection (Nthamburi, 1991:3). The granting of the Royal Charter to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) in 1888 had a direct bearing on the expansion of Protestant missionary activities. Sir William Mackinnon, the company's director, encouraged the missions to extend their work into the interior, particularly where the company could ensure their safety. Being a Scotsman himself, Mackinnon encouraged the establishment of the East African Scottish Mission. He assisted in securing the services of Dr. James Stewart, Livingstone's successor in Lovedale, Nyasaland (Malawi). The mission station was completed in 1899 under the leadership of Thomas Watson (Nthamburi, 1991:4). Stewart left for the interior on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1891 with a party of seven missionaries and 273 porters. The original purpose was to go as far as Kikuyuland, but due to turbulence among the Gikuyu, he decided to settle at Kibwezi. The Church Missionary Society established itself in Kibwezi by 1890. In Kibwezi, the mission encountered numerous misfortunes. Not only was the mission decimated by famine, but also a number of people were killed in raids. It was decided that the mission should be transferred to Kikuyu forthwith. Rev. Thomas Watson led the Scottish Mission to Kikuyu in 1898. By 1899, a mission station had already been built at Thogoto (c.f. Muriuki, 1974:55-6; Barrett, 1973:27).



The establishment of the British East Africa Protectorate and the building of the 'Uganda Railway', which was begun in Mombasa in 1895, reaching Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu in 1901 provided an impetus for other missions to venture into the interior. The railway provided a cheap and safe route across the savannah and a thorn-scrub country inhabited by the warlike Wakamba and Wamaasai. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established themselves in Taveta by 1890 according to Barrett (1973:27). Taveta was an important Arab Swahili trading center, as well as a supply station for caravans about to cross Masailand (Barrett, 1973:27). The other primary target of the CMS was the Kikuyuland, for which there seemed to be a strong competition among missions. The other major competitor was the Church of Scotland Mission, which already was established at Thogoto. The CMS located itself in Kabete, within eight kilometer of the Presbyterians. In order to limit conflicts, the 'sphere of influence' doctrine was enacted. An imaginary line was drawn between the Ngong Hills and Mount Kenya, with the CMS getting the region east of the line, while the Scottish mission got the area west of the line. The CMS spread to Kihuruko in 1901, Weithaga in 1903, Kahuhia in 1906, and Mahiga in 1908. The Church of Scotland went to Nyeri and to the southern part of Meru (see geographical map of Kenya Addendum 7). There was contention between the CMS and the United Methodist Free Churches Mission over the territory of the Embu. Apparently, the governor had offered the Embu to the Methodists, while the land commissioner, Colonel Montgomery, a member of the local governing body of the Anglican Mission, had it given to the CMS. The conflict delayed the missionary occupation of Embu for almost a year. It was finally resolved in favor of the CMS, and the Methodists were appeased by being given leave to occupy Meru (Barrett, 1973:27).

The English Society of Friends began an industrial mission on the Island of Pemba, but his mission did not grow. In 1901, the American Friends organized the Friends Africa Industrial Mission in western Kenya, led by W.R. Hotchkins. He was one of the pioneers of the African Inland Mission, and was convinced that what was needed was a practical mission, rather than just preaching. He organized the Friends Africa Industrial Mission with a center at Kaimosi in 1902. He resigned from that mission after six months, preferring to organize a new mission, the Lumbwa Industrial Mission, with its center at Kericho.

The Africa Inland Mission was established as a 'faith mission,' with a basis that resembled that of the China Inland Mission or the Sudan Interior Mission. The African Inland Mission (AIM) was the largest mission in Akamba country and saw its service primarily in terms of preaching (Moede, 1972:146). It began its ministry in Kenya in 1895 under the direction of Peter Cameron Scott. The mission was interdenominational, and was comprised of many Baptists, some Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans. The mission was started in Ukambani, but after a number of incidents, C. E. Hurlburt moved it to Kijabe in 1901. In 1907, a station was opened at Kapropita among the Tugen people. The Mission became independent from the parent body in 1943.

The Gospel Missionary Society was a Pentecostal group within the Africa Inland Mission that constituted itself into a different mission in 1902. Under the patronage of a missionary settler by the name of Krieger, it opened its first station on Kambui Hill with the help of Rev. and Mrs. Knapps, who were their first missionaries. In 1905, the mission founded another outpost at Ng'enda (where Dr. Henderson worked), and started a girl's school. From 1940 to 1945, the Gospel Missionary Society was actually trying to wind up its activities, as it was a small mission. It had found it hard to exist, and the church and the missionaries had decided where to go. One missionary went back to the Africa Inland Mission, but the church decided to join the Church of Scotland Mission, which was to become the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. The Africans apparently felt that there was more freedom of expression in the P.C.E.A. than in the A.I.M (Anderson, 1977: 2).

Missionaries from the United States started the work of the Church of God in western Kenya, in 1905. One of their first missionaries was a black man from South Africa by the name of Yohana Mbila. He introduced modern hoes [for agriculture] and was an outstanding evangelist at Kima. The proclamation of the gospel went hand in hand with social services, such as education and medical services. At Kima, a hospital, a Bible school and a teacher training college were built. The church endeavored to produce local evangelists and missionaries to further the work in the outlying areas. The Pentecost Assemblies of Canada also began their ministry in 1921. The Church had grown rapidly, particularly in western Kenya and Nairobi, and it has a Bible College at Nyang'ori, as well as a printing press called Evangel Publishing House that publishes Christian literature.

The Southern Baptists began their work in Kenya in 1956. With their extensive staff, they are able to expand too many areas at the same time. The German Seventh Day Adventists started work in the Mwanza area in 1893. In 1906, they moved into Kenya and concentrated their work in western Kenya, particularly in Kisii and south Nyanza. Seventh Day Adventists stress the imminent return of Christ, and believe that food laws and Sabbath laws of the Old Testament should still be followed by Christians. Not only do they forbid the drinking of alcohol and smoking, they also stress abstinence from tea and coffee and meat. They have engaged not only in pastoral ministry but also in social ministry (schools and medical work). They have opened the University College of East Africa, the only church sponsored university college in the country (Barrett, 1973:28).

The Salvation Army is another established church that started work in Kenya in 1921. The Salvation Army came to Akamba country, competing with AIM (Nthamburi, 1991:7). It opened a number of stations, including Nairobi, Thika, Malakisi and Embu. It is well known for its charitable work, such as the school for the blind at Thika and schools for the physically handicapped. The Wokofu African Church split from the Salvation Army in 1966. The Salvation Army does not practice water baptism or Holy Communion. The Pentecostal Assemblies of God Mission, which was the work of the Apostolic Faith Mission of Iowa (U.S.A.), opened up its work at Nyang'ori and spread to the outlying areas.

The Methodist Church has its endeavor to move into the interior. Having procrastinated for far too long on the coast and on the Tana River due to limited resources, the mission (now the United Methodist Mission), moved to Meru in 1912, where it established the first station at Kaaga. It soon opened many outstations and schools, culminating in the opening of a hospital at Maua, but the mission worked mainly in central and northern Meru (Barrett, 1973: 31-33).

According to Barrett (1973:31-33) the Roman Catholic missionary outreach in East Africa was begun by the French Congregation of the Holy Ghost among the ex-slaves of Reunion. A permanent station was established in Zanzibar in 1863, with two priests, Anthony Homier and Edward Baur, and two brothers. Immediately after the railway was finished in 1899, the Holy Ghost Mission moved to Limuru, west of Nairobi. They received assistance from Consolata Fathers, an Italian Society of Turin. The Mill Hill Roman Catholic missionaries came to Kenya

via Uganda in 1903 and a mission was established at Kisumu (1973: 31-33). The Mill Hill congregation was the only British society doing mission work in Kenya during the 1900's.

At the height of the abolition of the slave trade, the Congregation established a mission station at Bagamoyo in order to serve as a resettlement village for the liberated slaves (Barrett, 1973: 31-33). According to Barrett (1973:31-33) when Sir Battle Frere inspected the station he was full of praise for what was being done for the liberated slaves. His main criticism of other mission stations was that they "tended to be too bookish". (1973:31-33). He saw a ray of hope in the endeavours of the Holy Ghost station. The Bagamoyo station at then an estate of eighty acres, which was run by four priests and eight lay brothers. There were also twelve sisters of the Filles de Marie order as well as 324 freed slaves (251 children and 173 adults). The freed slaves were taught skilled trades and manual labor (1973:31-33).

When Zanzibar was raised from the rank of prefecture to that of vicariate in 1883, John de Courmont was named as the vicar apostolic (Barrett, 1973:33). He immediately started to expand the work of the Society by starting a station at Kosi, on the Tana River. The station was moved to Mombasa in 1890, under the supervision of Le Roy and Charles Gommeginger (1973:33). In 1891, the Society opened a station at Bura, near Voi. Bishop Allgeyer is credited with taking the initiative to move into the interior of Kenya. In 1899, immediately after the railway line reached Nairobi, the Holy Ghost mission moved there. The St. Austin Mission became a center for industrial training. The St. Austin Mission opened other outstations, namely Kabaain Ukambani, Gatanga in Murang'a and Rioki, in Kiambu. The Congregation of the Holy Ghost accepted assistance from the Consolata Society of Turin. The first Italian Fathers arrived in June of 1902. They were stationed at Kiambu (1973:33).

David B. Barrett has looked at the continent-wide movement, and has made an exhaustive survey of the indigenous church movement, identifying the factors that are responsible for the emergence of these churches (Barrett, 1973: 1-50). He recognizes that American traditional culture, American religion, missionary paternalism, the colonial legacy, and the conditions of modern society are factors that have been responsible for the proliferation of indigenous churches (Barrett, 1973: 50). He recognizes that American traditional culture, American religion, missionary paternalism, the

colonial legacy, and the conditions of modern society are factors that have been responsible for the proliferation of indigenous churches (Barrett, 1973: 50).

According to Barrett (1973:33) the Consolata mission was born out of the spiritual enthusiasm of Father Allamano, who was inspired by the memoirs of the Capuchin mission in Ethiopia. He inaugurated a missionary training institute (Institute Mission Consolata), which was responsible for training its missionaries. From Kiambu, the work spread to Limuru (1903), Manglu, and Thika (1906). During 1905, the Zanzibar vicariate was divided between the Holy Ghost and the Consolata missions. The latter were given the whole of the Mt. Kenya area, and the Society recorded its first baptisms in 1907. According to Barrett (1973:33) shortly afterwards there was friction between the two missions, because the boundaries they had set for themselves were imaginary, and they found themselves infringing on one another's territory. The conflict was not resolved until 1931 (Barrett, 1973:33).

The Society spread to Murang'a, with Tutho as their base (Barrett, 1973:40-44). The Nyeri vicariate was formed in 1909, with Filippo Perlo as its first vicar apostolic. Their large mission at Nyeri was Mathare, where they established an estate of one thousand acres. This estate is still in existence as part of the Nyeri diocese. They used the large plantation for the support of their missionary outreach. Between 1911 and 1913, the Consolata Mission established four stations in Meru. In 1922, Father Maraviglia opened outstations at Baricho and Kianyaga. Meru became a prefecture in 1926, under the leadership of Monsignor G. Balbo. The Society attempted to enter Embu, but they were stopped by the government authorities until the 1930s, when permission was granted. In the early 1920s the Consolata Fathers from Kenya moved to Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, to open new work there, and they also spread to the southern highlands (Barrett, 1973:40-44).

According to Barrett (1973:40-44) while the Holy Ghost missionaries were used to comfortable quarters and built complex structures, the Consolata were used to simplicity, often beginning with humble and makeshift buildings until they were able to afford permanent buildings. The Holy Ghost missionaries were predominantly French, while the Consolata missionaries were solely Italian.

The Mill Hill group was English and Dutch (Barrett, 1973: 40-44). The Mill Hill group came to Kenya via Uganda, where they had established their work. The railway had reached Kisumu in 1901. The first Mill Hill missionaries were sent to Kisumu in 1903 in order to spread the Gospel amongst the Mumias in 1904. Van den Bergh opened the first station in Kakamega in 1906, and within three years, there were four stations operating in western Kenya. In 1908, Plunkett opened another station in Nakuru to cater to the Catholics who were working in the railway station there. Kisii station was opened by Father Brandsman in 1910, and in 1911, a new station was started at Nyabururu. During the same year, John Biermans was named vicar apostolic (Barrett, 1973: 40-44).

According to Barrett (1973: 50) the Roman Catholic missionary outreach was augmented to a large degree by numerous orders of sisters. The first sisters to arrive on the scene were the Daughters of St. Vincent, in 1903. By 1918, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters was formed as an African congregation. It was elevated to the status of a religious congregation in 1927. The first African Mother superior, sister Giulia Wambui, was elected in 1946. The Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary were part of the Mill Hill congregation and started working in western Kenya in 1902 (Barrett, 1973: 50).

The development of the indigenous church movement in Africa started during the colonial period. Historically speaking, the movement began in 1862. At present, it is estimated that there are more than seven thousand indigenous churches in Africa, with a total membership of about 35 million Christians. It is also recognized that these churches are growing much faster than the historic or mission-founded Churches. In Kenya, the majority of the indigenous churches are located in western Kenya, among the Luo and the Luhya peoples (Nthamburi, 1991:10). The area, which was formerly called Kavirondo, was part of the Uganda Protectorate, and was transferred to Kenya in 1902, the year that the first Christian missionaries reached the area. The Anglican Church in Nyanza, however, remained part of the diocese of Kampala until 1921, when it was transferred to the Kenya diocese.

Missions that settled in both Nyanza and Kavirondo were the CMS, Catholic Missions, the Seventh Day Adventists, the African Inland Mission, the Friends Mission and the Church of God Mission. In 1924, a later arrival was a Canadian Pentecostal Mission, which was established on the borders of the Luo and Luhyia territory (Nthamburi, 1991:10). It is surprising to find that the proliferation of indigenous churches took place in an area where missions were so well received, and where the response to mission teaching was positive. All or most of the mission churches had a large following in the area by the 1920s, and their influence was increasingly felt in the grassroots communities. As time went on, however, it soon became evident that all was not well in the rank and file of the mission churches.

The first group that heralded the secession movement was Mumboism, which was a politico-religious movement introduced by Onyango Dunde. Even though the movement never made a major impact, it set a precedent for secession. The first indigenous church in Kenya came into being in 1914, when Johana Owelo, who had started as a Catholic seminarian, left the CMS mission to form the Nomiya Luo Mission (Nthamburi, 1991:10). Two years later, Alfayo Odongo started the Roho movement, which later became the Roho Musanda church. Another movement broke away from the Friends Mission to form the Dini ya Roho, or the Church of the Holy Spirit. In 1952, from within the Roman Catholic Church, there appeared a prophetess, Miriam Ragot, who denounced the Church of Rome and the white race. Although the movement was suppressed, it soon reappeared in 1963, through another Luo prophetess, Gaudencia Aoko, who started the Legio Maria Church.

The Church of Christ in Africa was another major church that broke away from a mission church, and that break was related to the revival within the Anglican Church. The revival movement in East Africa started in Ruanda in 1927, but did not reach Nyanza until 1938 (Nthamburi, 1991:9). While the attitude of the missionaries towards revival was calculated ambivalence, they were able to contain the revival within the church. In 1952 however, there were two main factions within the revival: the Joremo (people of blood) and the Johera (people of love). The Anglican Church tended to lean towards the Joremo, which tended to be aligned with the establishment, while the Johera movement tended to be regarded as out of step with the Church. After failing to be reconciled to the Anglican Church, the Johera movement broke away and formed a new church under the



leadership of Matthew Ajuoga, who was an Anglican priest. The Africa Israel Church Nineveh is another important indigenous church in western Kenya. It emerged out of the Pentecostal experience under the inspiration of a charismatic leader, Paul David Zakayo Kivuli (Nthamburi, 1991:9). He had been associated with the Pentecostal mission at Nyang'ori and became a member of the Pentecostal Church. In 1932, through a serious illness, he received the spirit. From that moment, Kivuli started to preach from village to village, gathering a large number of adherents. Kivuli named his church the Africa Israel Church Nineveh, denoting its independence from mission control. In general, the church adopted a puritan ethic, prohibiting polygamy and the use of tobacco and alcohol. The church has been able to make a smooth transition, even after the death of the founder. The Africa Israel Church Nineveh is a member of the World Council of Churches and of the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

The indigenous church movement in central Kenya is identified with the cultural nationalism that swept the country in 1920s and 1930s. While there were other areas of conflict between mission churches and the socio-religious traditions of the Agikuyu, the renunciation of the practice of female genital mutilation was the last straw in an already volatile situation. According to Francis Anaeme, a senior librarian of the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, some of the common harmful traditional practices against women in the African communities include female genital mutilation, child marriage, ritualistic widowhood practices, nutritional taboos, cult prostitution, domestic violence, and sexual freedom for husbands (2012:1). From the beginning, the missions came out strongly against the practice. The issue reached a crisis stage in 1928, when the Kikuyu Central Association, led by James Beuttah and Joseph Kang'ethe, at a conference in Nyeri, made a strong challenge to the missionary attitude towards circumcision. The Christian Church came to be regarded by the Agikuyu as being swayed by imperialist motives. The Africa Independent Pentecostal Church came out of Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA). Kikuyu Karing'a founded an association, the Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association (Karinga's), out of the African Orthodox Church, which later became the African Greek Orthodox Church, originating from Uganda.

Both the Karing'a and the KISA were established with a positive purpose: to provide more and better education, and to have education without the ban on female circumcision, which



the foreign missions were trying to impose. The Karing'a was established in 1928, "Karing'a" meaning "pure," and thus showing their desire to return to tradition and tribal ways. Originally, its leaders had stated that for seven years they would have nothing to do with religion; though, after this period there was a great demand for baptism. The KISA, on the other hand, had no desire to separate religion from education (Ritsi, 1991:9).

The African Greek Orthodox Church (or the Orthodox Church of Kenya) is part of the Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria, and is in communion with the worldwide Eastern Orthodox churches. There are other smaller churches, which have separated themselves from both of these churches, mostly on leadership grounds rather than because of any doctrinal issue. The National Independent Church of Africa broke away from the Africa Independent Pentecostal Church, while the Independent African Orthodox Church broke away from the African Greek Orthodox Church (Nthamburi, 1991:10).

The African Brotherhood Church in Ukambani was founded in 1945. In 1942, Simeon Mulandi became an evangelist with the Gospel Furthering Fellowship. He organized the Akamba Christian Brotherhood. The church was later renamed as the African Brotherhood Church (ACB). Three aims guided Mulandi and the ACB. First was the rejection of missionary Christianity's slowness to educate. The ACB would work for greater progress in Akamba country. Second, ACB stood for brotherhood. Akambas resented the fragmentation of their society, which Christianity had brought with its rival denominations, sometimes in keen competition with one another. Third, the ACB disliked missionary domination of the African Church (Moede, 1972:145-147). The structure of the ABC is hierarchical:

The Church is headed by a *Bishop*, who uses one *Archdeacon* to help him with administrative and spiritual duties. The whole Church is divided into *pastorates*. A *Canon* supervises two or more *pastorates*. A *Pastor* is over a particular *pastorate*, and under him are usually two *Deacons* over the *sub pastorates*. A *pastorate* must contain at least twenty congregations and in 1969 the largest *pastorate* contained thirty-nine. The *Evangelist* is the lowest in the hierarchy and is over two or more congregations. The man responsible in every congregation is a *Lay Leader*, assisted by *Elders*. Every congregation then has someone in authority, who is under someone, who is under someone else, and so on up to

the *Bishop*. The system is hierarchical. At every level there is a Church Council. The paid minister of the Word, whether he is *Evangelist*, *Deacon*, or *Pastor*, is the executive (Moede, 1972:150).

It is estimated that there are about one hundred and eighty indigenous churches in Kenya. Ordinarily these churches are not founded by theologians or clerics. They are largely founded at the initiative of lay people who are concerned about the authenticity of the church. Many of them struggle to indigenize Christianity by incorporating African traditional religious worldviews. They resent the decadence that they feel traditional Christianity tolerates. They look for a spiritually buoyant church that is truly a reflection of African spirituality, and they attach great importance to community life and human relations. In the face of strained extended family systems, they provide a welcome alternative. They also give women a prominent place in the hierarchy of the church in a way that the mission-founded churches do not. For example, the Sisters have very nearly the same training as male ministers of the Word, but their work is quite different in the ABC structures. Some become Sunday school organizers; others are choir or music specialists. Some of the Sisters help in administration and secretarial work of the ABC. The sisters can preach as well. None, however, is allowed to administer the Eucharist (Moede, 1972:152). The worship of these churches is so lively and meaningful that it challenges the older churches to do something about their archaic and somewhat dull services. These churches have experienced tremendous growth because they are so relevant to their adherents. As more theologians from indigenous churches endeavor to systematize and standardize their teaching and doctrine, there will continue to be a strong and spirit-filled church contribution to the Christian witness in Africa.

### **3.4. The historical background of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa**

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) is the product of the merger of the missionary work of the American Gospel Missionary Society (GMS) and the Scottish Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) in 1946. The two missions had been working independently of each other in central Kenya since 1898 (Githii, 2009:4). The Rev. Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf is regarded as the pioneer missionary in Eastern Africa, following his arrival at Rabai in the coastal city of Mombasa in 1844. Despite being a German and a Lutheran priest, he was sent to East Africa by a British missionary agency, namely the Church Missionary. Over time, other missionary bodies followed suit and, by

1900, there were many mission groups operating in British East Africa. Nthamburi (1991:4) explains that the partition of Africa by the Berlin Conference in (1884/1885) had implications for the pattern that missions later followed. Missionary societies tended to respect their nation of origin, as they perceived the need to have maximum protection. The granting of the Royal Charter to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) in 1888 had a direct bearing on the expansion of Protestant missionary activities (Groves, 1964:26). Sir William Mackinnon, the company's director, encouraged missions to extend their work into the interior, particularly where the company could ensure their safety (Oliver, 1952: 170). Being a Scotsman himself, Mackinnon encouraged the establishment of East African (Nthamuri, 1991:4).

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa began as a private venture in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Muita, 2003:1). This followed the opening and initiation of the mission work in East Africa Chartered Company (IBEAC) which was incorporated under a Royal charter from Queen Victoria in 1888 (Muita, 2003:1). The British penetration of East Africa began at Zanzibar in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Africa was subjected to regional colonization by the powerful expansion politics of many European powers (Muita, 2003:1). Such colonization secured both the economic future for the Europeans and opened path for commerce and Christianity (Muita, 2003:1). In 1887, the British East Africa Association was formed. It became the Imperial East Africa Company in 1888 acquiring both the trading rights and the administrative responsibilities on behalf the British government (Muita, 2003:2). In the same year 1888, the Imperial British East Africa Company established claims on Kenya and Uganda (Muita, 2003:2). In 1890 and 1894, British protectorates were established over the Sultanate of Zanzibar and the Buganda kingdom (Muita, 2003:2; Falk, 1985: 234).

The Free Church in Scotland broke away from the established Church of Scotland in 1843 because of the state interference with the affairs of the church (Muita, 2003:2). The former members, who joined the newly formed Free Church like Sir William Mackinnon and Mr. Alexander Low Bruce, conceived the idea of a mission in East Africa in 1889-189 as they got concern over the spiritual welfare people in their territory (c.f. Scott, 1932: 58; Muita, 2003:2). The directors formed a committee called East African Scottish Mission (EASM). Sir William Mackinnon and Alexander Low Bruce were the chair and the secretary/treasurer respectively (Muita, 2003:2). Rev Dr. James

Stewart was approached by the committee for his services under the Free Church of Scotland (Muita, 2003:2).

Dr James Stewart accompanied Sir David Livingstone on his expedition in 1862; Stewart, the principal of Lovedale Institution in South Africa, was on leave in Scotland at the time (Muita, 2003:2). Rev Dr. Stewart departed in May 1891 for East Africa. He left Mombasa in 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1891 for the missionary work accompanied with 273 porters. Muita identifies the following as part of the entourage that accompanied Stewart was Thomas Watson (Evangelist), John Linton (Carpenter), John Grieg (Engineer), Cornelius Rahman (Storekeeper), George Wilson and Dr. Robert Unwin Moffat (c.f. MacPherson, 1970:21; Muita, 2003:2-3). All but Stewart and Grieg were under thirty years with only Stewart ordained Muita (2003:2). George Wilson who had accompanied Captain Lugard was engaged as the guide for the safari and expedition Muita (2003:2). The East African Scottish Mission in Edinburgh had instructed the new team to proceed to Machakos or Dagoretti. The mission was established initially as the survey was being carried out in the country (Omukoli, 1997:61). Muita (2003:3) indicates that the establishment of the British rule in Kenya was done in the following phases:

The first phase was Kenya as a British Consular District, 1895-1905. In July 1885, the British established a protectorate over areas between Mombasa and Rift Valley (Muita, 2003:3). The desire was to control and protect shipping to India, Uganda and the Nile Valley region. The British encountered resistance from the Swahili-Arabs who dominated international commerce along the East African Coastal region for a year before they subdued them (Muita, 2003:3). To the north, in Jubaland, The Ogaden Somalis were not fully subdued until 1925 (Muita, 2003:3). During the last part of the 1800, the British were preoccupied with the construction of the railroad from Mombasa to Uganda, which had begun in 1895 and therefore systematic phase of “pacification” was postponed until the railway was completed in 1901 (Muita, 2003:2). In 1898, 13000 Indians were brought into Kenya for building of the Kenya-Uganda rail. Sir Charles Eliot, the commissioner for the Consular District from 1886-1904, established a more overt government presence in Kenya and imposed a hut-tax (uniform tax on every African home). This was in order to make the protectorate economically self-sufficient and promoted European settlement (Muita, 2003:2).

According to Muita (2003:2) the second phase was Kenya as a settlement colony. The formation of Kenya as a settlement colony was through Eliot's efforts to have Kenya occupied and British traditions and Western civilization be introduced to Kenyans as in North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Muita, 2003:3). The settlers managed to dominate the British government policy and in 1905, the white settlers made a declaration enforcing racial segregation in both urban centers and the white settlers' highlands (Muita, 2003:3). Following the example of South, the government enacted laws aimed at controlling and subjugating Africans. They established native reserves where Africans were supposed to live. This forced them to find work in the money sector in order to be able to pay these new taxes and finally implementing pass law system to control the movements of Africans and assist European settlers in recruiting labor (Muita, 2003:3). By 1920, missionary-educated elite composed of clerks, teachers and pastors, formed welfare organizations to protect Africans (Muita, 2003:3). They discreetly avoided to redress specific Africans' grievances directly and dared not to challenge the concept of the colonial rule at that time but to establish a base for future opposition for the colonialism (Muita, 2003:3; Nthamburi, 1991:10-11).

The Church of Scotland Mission sent Thomas Watson (evangelist), John Grieg (engineer), John Linto (carpenter), and Cornellius Rahman (storekeeper) to Kenya. At Mombasa they were joined by the Rev. Dr. James Stewart, Dr. Robert Unwin Moffat and George Wilson. They arrived together in Kibwezi on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1891 in order to set up the first mission station. The Kibwezi mission station did not last long due to the following reasons: Firstly, the area was sparsely populated, and secondly it was infested with many mosquitos, which cause malaria hence, the death toll was very high among the missionaries (Muita, 2003:4-5). Mr. Thomas Watson visited Dagoretti in 1894 to explore possibilities of transferring the mission station (Omukoli, 1997:64). Following the closure of Kibwezi on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1898, Watson settled at Baraniki. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 1899, he was joined by two missionaries, namely Paterson, who was returning from leave and Alexander Walker a carpenter who accompanied Paterson (Omukoli, 1997:64). An additional missionary arrived on 27<sup>th</sup> February, in the person Dr. Homer, a medical practitioner. Baraniki was not seen as a suitable location for doing mission work. This eventually resulted in the relocation of the mission station at Thogoto. On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1899 thirty acres of land was purchased for the relocation of the mission station. A further ten acres were bought in the following year.

With this done, the construction of permanent mission buildings was embarked upon. When Thogoto was opened, however, Baraniki was not closed, as Paterson remained there, continuing with his agricultural projects (Omulokoli, 1997:64).

The second station to be opened was Kikuyu station in 1899 (MacPherson, 1970:27; Muita, 2003:6). The Kikuyu mission was successful (Muita, 2003:7). At the Kikuyu mission, the foundation for translation of the Bible was laid. The first indigenous people were baptized in 1908 (Muita, 2003:9). The translation of the Gospels and hymns assisted a lot in the mission work amongst the indigenous people. Mr. Arthur R Barlow translated the Gospel Mark into Gikuyu in 1908. In 1915, the Gikuyu hymn book “*Nyimbo cia Kuinira Ngai*” was produced (Omulokoli, 1997:65). By 1920, the four gospels had been translated in the Gikuyu language (Muita, 2003:15).

The third station to be started was the Tumutumu mission station in 1908 (Muita, 2003:11). Work at Tumutumu station was spearheaded by Africans under the guidance of missionaries (Muita, 2003:11). On 31<sup>st</sup> September 1908, Petro Mugo was sent to Tumutumu to do mission work under the indigenous people. Petro was later replaced by Mr. Daniel Wachira who was in Dr. Henry’s Scott catechumen class. The first African missionaries made use of Ruffel Barlow’s hymns translated into the Gikuyu language. In Tumutumu, the first African girls are recorded to do mission work (Muita, 2003:12). The church expanded rapidly. By 1915, new congregations were started at Nyeri, Mahiga, Kamwangi, Magutu and Mihuti. The Chogoria Mission station was started in 1915, when the missionary society agreed to hand over to the Church Society of Scotland Mission in the Chuka- Mwibi area (Muita, 2003:13). Just like in Tumutumu, work at Chogoria was pioneered by African missionaries that were trained in Kikuyu. These African missionaries managed the mission schools and led the worship services (Muita, 2003:13).

The mission at Kambui, which was initiated under Gospel Missionary Society, federated with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa during 1945. Missionary work in Kenya began in 1885 when a party of missionaries from the United States of America arrived in East Africa (Muita, 2003:14). Just like the other mission stations, mission work at Kambui consisted of managing a hospital and running schools (Muita, 2003:14). Many difficulties and challenges were encountered during the

planting the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Language was a major challenge in the propagation of the gospel (Muita, 2003:15).

In Kenya, discussions on missionary unity were held at numerous occasions under the leadership of Dr. Scott. In 1913, five missionary societies in Kenya held a Conference at Thogoto and a proposal to form a federation. According to Nthamburi (1991:27) the first proposal was to form a united native church, which, implied that spheres of influence would be abolished. The conference also agreed to form an Alliance of Missions, which unfortunately due to First World War did not take place (Muita, 2003:16). In 1918, when the war was almost over, the Alliance of Protestant missions was established at Kikuyu with the renewed aim of uniting the missionary work towards encouraging an indigenous native church Muita (2003:16). There were three objectives: to build an Alliance Medical Training College, to build Alliance High School and to build Alliance technical College. Muita (2003:16) points out that of the three objectives, only Alliance High School realized. The Church Missionary Society gave land for the construction of the school. The participation of the PCEA in the Alliance of Protestant Missions was an early indication of her participation in future ecumenical endeavours (Muita, 2003:16). Another challenge that was faced by new church was the question of female circumcision also known as female genital mutilation. This Kikuyu custom became an issue of concern on the church as early as 1915 (Muita, 2003:16). Dr. Philip started a campaign to fight against circumcision. The church took it up as a challenge and begun teaching that female circumcision was a sin. This eventually led to schism in the church in 1929 (Muita, 2003:16).

### **3.5. Constitutional development of the PCEA (1920 -1945)**

During 1920, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) was established (Muita 2003:20). Committees to serve local congregations and parishes were established. Attention was given to establish a form of church governance to be followed through the Presbyterian church of East Africa. Muita (2003:20) observes that Africans were needed to take up leadership roles and responsibilities in the PCEA. The first kirk session in the Presbyterian church of East Africa was formed at St Andrew's church, Nairobi, in 1919, after about twenty years of pastoral work among white settlers, administrators and expatriates working mainly in the Highlands of Kenya, Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika and Kampala Uganda (Muita, 2003:21). Muita furthermore points out that



the congregations in those places were basically for the white people until those countries attained independence in the 1960s. The Rev. James Youngson, the minister of the Word at St. Andrew's became the first moderator of the kirk session (Muita, 2003:21).

The mission stations at Kikuyu and Tumutumu were growing and expanding in their pastoral work, and new congregations were being started in the districts (Muita, 2003:23). Many African men had been identified as potential leaders of the church since the formation of pastoral committees in the two mission stations and the several congregations already organized. The first important activity of the church in the 1920 was to ordain several of these men as elders of the Presbyterian Church so that they could assume leadership roles in the church (Muita, 2003:23). The Rev. Dr. James Ogivile, a former moderator of the Church of Scotland, was sent to Kenya to help set up kirk sessions and the Presbytery of East Africa. He arrived in September 1920 and ordained into eldership Mr. Ruffel Barlow and Dr. E Stanley Jones both of whom were mission staff, and Mr. McClelland Wilson, a local settler from Scotland. The first Kikuyu kirk session was formed and inaugurated during September 1920 (Muita, 2003:23). The St. Andrew's kirk session and the three newly ordained elders at Kikuyu met in Nairobi and formed the Presbytery of East Africa on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1920 (Muita, 2003:23). The Rev. Ogivile presided over the formation of the presbytery, and the Rev. Youngson was elected moderator of the presbytery while Mr. A R Barlow became the clerk. The Presbytery was given the mandate to become the final court of appeal of the native church in East Africa. This new presbytery gave authority for the ordination of native elders both at Kikuyu and Tumutumu. On the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1920 the Rev. Dr. Ogivile ordained twenty seven elders to be added to the roll with the three white elders ordained earlier (Muita, 2003:23).

The Kikuyu Kirk session met that afternoon under Dr. Arthur, who became the first moderator. Mr. Barlow was elected the session clerk, while Mr. Filipu Karanja was elected the assistant session clerk. Dr. E. Stanley Jones was elected treasurer of the session and Mr. Samuel Gitau the assistant treasurer of the session. Two members of the of the kirk session were elected as representatives of the session of the presbytery: they Alfred Muturi and Daudi Ndatha (Muita, 2003:23).



The Tumutumu session was formed and inaugurated on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1920 and linked up with the other two in the presbytery of East Africa. The Tumutumu kirk session met that afternoon under Rev. Dr. Arthur and Dr. Philip. The Rev. Dr. RGM Calderwood arrived in 1921 was given the responsibility of directing the new kirk sessions along approved Presbyterian lines.

The first Presbyterian meeting with nine Europeans and four African elders (two each from the kirk sessions of Kikuyu and Tumutumu met at Kikuyu on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1920. The new constitution drafted by on the basis of the *Constitution of the Church of Scotland* was approved at the constitution meeting of the first presbytery. The *Constitution* defined the authority of the Presbytery:

- a) The Presbytery was to be the final court of appeal in all matters affecting the “Native church” and local ministers of the Word and elders, but the European ministers of the Word and elders had the right to appeal to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.
- b) The Presbytery had oversight of the Kirk session, licensing and ordination of local candidates for the ministry and their oversight during training and thereafter, but approval of the course of study was reserved for the General assembly of the Church of Scotland.
- c) The Moderator of the Presbytery, was to be chosen annually, was to be one of the ordained missionaries.
- d) The membership of the Presbytery consisted of all ordained missionaries, all ordained ministers of the Word, all ordained European elders and one of African ordained elder from each kirk session, each to be chosen annually (Muita, 2003: 26).

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa was constituted in such manner that the discipline, finances, governance of the PCEA were still under the control of the missionaries. There were not any trained African ministers of the Word to take up the ordained positions in the newly constituted church. The new Presbytery therefore had the responsibility to embarked on the training of ministers of the Word (Muita, 2003:26).

The first ministers of the Word were ordained 7<sup>th</sup> March 1926, namely Musa Gitau, Benjamin Githieya and Joshua Matenjwa at the church of the Torch in Thogoto after successfully completion

of the theological formation program. On 14<sup>th</sup> March 1926 a second ordination took place at Tumutumu, namely Paulo Kahuho, Solomon Ndambi, Jeremiah Waita, Joshua Riunga and Simeon Karechu. The above mentioned were posted to different parts of the country where they served with total devotion and distinction in spite of the difficulties that they faced in their ministry (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:27).

Besides those given training to be ordained as ministers of the Word and sacraments, the PCEA also trained a number of evangelists. Those who qualified were trained to be senior evangelists and eventually trained to be ministers of the Word. The training course lasted eight years (Muita, 2003:27). In preparation for ordination of the first African ministers of the Word, the church produced a *Book for Public Worship*; in Gikuyu, it was called *Mbuko ya Mahoya Ma Kuhothia*. The *Mbuko ya Mahoya Ma Kuhothia* was utilized by the ministers of the Word in order to conduct worship services. Dr. Calderwood prepared guidelines for the kirk sessions and parishes (c.f. Benedetto, Guder, Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:27).

The Gospel Missionary Society also trained candidates for the ordained ministry. On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1930, Wanyoike wa Kamawe and Joshua Njoga were ordained at Kambui and Kihumbu-ni respectively. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1935, Johana Wanjau Gakaara, Zakaria Mutahi Mwai and James Gakunju Gatingi were ordained as ministers of the Word at Tumutumu. The theological training of the PCEA was offered at both Tumutumu and Kikuyu mission stations by Dr. Urthur and Dr. Calderwood. As at that time, the PCEA did not have its own college, the Presbytery decided to send two evangelists teachers to Fort Hare University in South Africa for higher theological studies (Muita, 2003:26). Charles Muhoro Kareri who, later became the first African moderator of the General Assembly) from Tumutumu, and Stevenson Githii Gathanga, from Kikuyu, were chosen in 1934 to undertake theological training at Fort Hare University in South Africa. They studied a two years diploma. Charles Muhoro Kareri and Stevenson Githii Gathanga played a pivotal role in the drafting of the first Constitution of an independent Presbyterian Church of East Africa (Muita, 2003:27).

In December 1936 the constitution of an the Overseas Presbytery of the Church of Scotland for European Churches in Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Nairobi was approved (Muita, 2003:26). The

church was divided along racial line, a feature that was common in many colonies (c.f. Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:26). Muita (2003:26) argues that this separation of the white and black church became an encouragement of desire for a truly independent church. The indigenous people wanted a church that would own property by law establish its own standards and a church that would negotiate its own agreements without interference from any other body (Muita, 2003:26).

The drafting of a constitution was spearheaded by Charles Muhoro Kareri and Stevenson Githii Gathanga. The constitution was drafted in 1940. The first PCEA synod was constituted during 1943. In 1940, Tumutumu became a Presbytery and Kikuyu Presbytery was inaugurated the same year. This paved the way for the formation of the synod in 1943. There was an agreement that the Africans should have decision powers in the newly constituted Presbyterian Church (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:26).

In 1937, the constitution of the Kenya Missionary Council was revised to allow Africans to become members. This gave impetus to work of preparing the constitution for the synod of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa to be completed. The newly created presbyteries were to be united to form a church of East Africa. The constitution was formally adopted on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1943. The constitution allowed the Presbyterian Church of East Africa to be independent except with regard to the following:

- a) All immovable property was to be held in trust for church and mission by the Church of Scotland Trust.
- b) Supervising and maintenance of theological training, hospitals and schools were to be undertaken cooperatively by Presbyterian church of East Africa and the church of Scotland; and
- c) There was to be no authority over the European Presbyterians in Kenya (Muita, 2003:26).

According to Muita (2003:31) the formation of the Presbytery led ultimately to the constitution of an autonomous African Church (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:51; Muita, 2003:26).

The Gospel Missionary Society operated in Kiambu and lower Muranga districts. The work originated from the Moody and Stanley revival in United States in 1870s and 1880s. In 1897, the Rev. and Mrs. Kreiger stationed themselves at Maremba Estate on Ruiru River. In 1899, he was joined by the WP Knapp, Knapp's wife Myrtle Ingersoll, and Ms. Margret Wheeler (Muita, 2003:26). In 1915, an agreement was reached with the Church Missionary Society to hand- over to the church of Scotland Mission all the work at Chuka- Mwimbi area. In 1915 Dr. E Stanley, Jones, William Tait, Daudi Makumi and a nurse, McMurties visited Chuka. They chose a site at Mweria. This mission federated with the PCEA in 1945.

The formal union of the two churches (Gospel Missionary Church and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa) and creation of the Presbytery of Chania took place in 1946 at Kambui. All the work previously under the Gospel Missionary Church was placed under the new Presbytery and its leadership accepted the Constitution of the Presbytery with a few amendments to accommodate such matters as baptism by immersion for the joint church and the transfer of land to Presbyterian Church of East Africa registered trustees (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:31).

### **3.6. The provision of education**

The Kikuyu Central Association, a political organization in central province, was clamoring for higher education, land reform, and the preservation of cultural identity in the wake of tribal disorganization. 'The Young Wagikuyu Party' was established with Harry Thuku as its secretary. He held many political rallies with the help of Indians and missionaries to fight of the rights of people. Issues included opposition to forced labor, taxation imposed on the people. Mr. Thuku was deported and detained at Kisimayu (Muita, 2003:32). This led to confrontation with the authorities, over 20 people were killed, and scores of other were detained. The outcome was that the organization went underground and later resurfaced in 1928 as Kikuyu Central Association with Kenyatta as its secretary. The latter was also editor of the *muiguithania* (reconciler), the first African paper (Muita, 2003:32). The organization demanded their land back from the white settlers. Many of the Agikuyu people could not differentiate between the "good" and the "bad" white missionary. In the eyes of the Africans, they were all the same with the same goal to

humiliate the African (Muita, 2003:33). Other issues of concern to Kikuyu Central Association were the obligation for Kenyans to register, in order to carry an African identity card called *kipande*, and the low wages paid by the European settlers to the workers on the farms (Muita, 2003:33). As the new political awareness grew, many of the members of the Kikuyu Central Association became anti-mission. They wanted an autonomous indigenous church, which would, embraced the cultural values of the Kenyans (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:51; 2003:33). In 1922, the colonial government issued a 'Government Sessional Paper', a White paper outlining the rights of the native people of Kenya and the establishment of a Legislative Council (Muita, 2003:33). The Governor appointed a Christian missionary to represent African interests in the Legislative Council.

The PCEA took a keen interest in providing education -at the primary and secondary level for its members (Muita, 2003:33). To this end, a teacher's college was established at Kambui and several schools were opened in the mission areas by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. The colonial government established the Phelps-Stokes 1923-1925 commission on African education in order to identify the educational, religious, economic, and social and health needs in each geographical area. The Phelps-Stokes 1923-1925 commission emphasized that there should be greater cooperation between the government and the missionaries in the financing and provision of education for the Africans. It also recommended a uniform system of all government and mission schools (Nthamburi, 1991:29).

In 1926, the Alliance High School for African education in Kenya was started in Kikuyu. The Kikuyu Mission sponsored both the land and the salary of the first school principal. The government helped in the building of the school, but the Alliance of Missions carried out the bulk of the work. This meant that for the first time in the history of Kenya, education at high school level was provided for Africans at Kikuyu. Much of the money to build Alliance High School came from contributions sent Christians to the members of the Carrier Corps, as well generous donations given by Mr. Ernest Carr. Some the early students included James Muigai Ngengi the younger brother of Jomo Kenyatta and many years latter Margaret Kenyatta (Muita, 2003:33).

Education in the country continued to develop with the church leading the way. In 1937, the secretary of state for the colonies set a commission to discuss education matters in East Africa colonies. The Director of Education appointed Dr. Arthur and Mr. Eliud Mathu to go to Makerere in Uganda to give evidence before the Commission about the need for secondary, primary and elementary schools, as well as the necessity to train teachers, and the girls' education (Benedetto, Guder, Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:2003:33).

### **3.7. Female Genital Mutilation controversy**

In 1929, a heated controversy broke out about the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) between the Scottish Presbyterian Mission and the Kikuyu membership (Muoki, 2009:3). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been practiced for over 2000 years in most parts of the world (Slack, 1988). Although it has obscure origins, there has been anthropological and historical research on how the practice came about. It is found in traditional group or community cultures that have patriarchal structures. Although FGM is practiced in some communities in the belief that it is a religious requirement, research shows that FGM pre-dates Islam and Christianity. Some anthropologists trace the practice to 5th century BC Egypt, with infibulations being referred to as 'Pharaonic circumcision' (Slack, 1988:9). Female genital mutilation (sometimes called female genital cutting and female genital mutilation/cutting) is defined by the World Health Organization as referring to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is a form of gender-based violence and has been recognised as a harmful practice and a violation of the human rights of girls and women. Between 100 and 140 million girls and women in the world are estimated to have undergone such procedures, and 3 million girls are estimated to be at risk of undergoing the procedures every year (1988:9).

The Scottish missionaries refused to admission girls and parents who had participated in the Female Genital Mutilation to the church. The missionaries had condemned the practice of FGM as un-Christian and an ethical. In response, the Kikuyu set up the independent churches and schools (Muoki, 2009:3). After the wife of one of the white missionaries was abducted and mutilated, the Church of Scotland called off the campaign to abolish the Female Genital Mutilation. Jomo Kenyatta also endorsed the abolishment of the ritual and opt it to be performed

on his own daughters in hospital (Muoki, 2009:3). In 1938 Kenyatta wrote in *Facing Mount Kenya*, “No proper Kikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who not been circumcised- this operation is regarded as the basis for the whole teaching of tribal law, religion and morality” (Muoki, 2009:3).

Arthur succeeded Dr. Henry E. Scott as head of the Kikuyu Mission and served in that capacity until 1937. In Muoki’s view Arthur’s service comprised of many accomplishments that earned him a great deal of popularity; During the First World War, Arthur fiercely opposed the conscription of the African members of the mission by the British, he worked with the colonial government, pressurizing it from within towards reforms and he challenged the power of the white settlers of Kenya on many occasions and defended Africans. For instance, he led the Alliance of Protestant Missions into protesting against the white settler’s abuse of Kenyans in the agricultural sector, and successfully convinced the colonial government not to permit forced labor on settler farms. He defended African interests on the Legislative Council. Unlike many white settlers, he believed that Kenyans should be given access to primary, secondary and tertiary education. In 1920s, he was prominent in leadership of a group of missionaries who succeeded in convincing the British government to open up education not only of Kenyans but also for Africans in all colonies. By 1926, he was so popular among the Kikuyus that they nicknamed him *Rigitari* (the happy warrior) (Muoki, 2009:3).

However, according to Muoki (2009:3) Arthur’s popularity started to wane in 1929 when he sought to strengthen the mission's resistance to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation. This practice was an ancient tradition of the Kikuyu tribe, who constituted the majority membership of the Church of Scotland Mission in Kenya. Arthur was appalled by the needless suffering inflicted upon women by female genital mutilation, and was especially outraged by the common incidence of forced female genital mutilation upon girls. Being a medical missionary, he could not tolerate the rite and therefore went ahead in condemning it as inhuman and barbaric (Muoki, 2009:4). To missionaries in Kikuyu land, Female Genital Mutilation was simply barbaric, and from a medical standpoint abhorrent and it was seen as not compatible with Christian teaching (Nthamburi, 1991:30).

According to Muoki (2009:4) many other missionaries in the country, the government, shared Arthur's views and the settlers, although agreeing with him in principle, accused him of stirring up an unnecessary controversy amongst the Kikuyu. Regardless of the government warnings, Arthur went ahead and imposed church discipline upon those girls and parents who took part in female genital mutilation rituals (Muoki, 2009:3). The excommunication of those who allowed "the cut" so much disrupted the Presbyterian Churches that it was caricatured by Kikuyu elites as "Arthur's eleventh commandment." Muoki (2009:4) observes that reaction was greater than Arthur had expected. The newly founded Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), which Arthur had previously supported and which was headed by Henry Thuku, denounced Arthur in retaliation. The Kikuyu membership became deeply discontented with the injunction and sought to defend their culture. Arthur and other Scottish missionaries went ahead and demanded that loyal members of the church denounce the Kikuyu Central Association (Muoki, 2009:3).

Arthur had misjudged the temper of the Kikuyu membership. Many absconded from church meetings as membership dwindled drastically. The most severe opposition to Arthur's "eleventh commandment" came from his former student Jomo Kenyatta, who in January 1930 returned from his studies in the United Kingdom (Muoki, 2009:3). According to Nthamburi (1991:30) the missionaries had failed to see the social implications of their injections to the concerned community. Female genital mutilation was necessary was seen as a way of marking graduation from adolescence to adulthood Nthamburi (1991:30). Circumcision was seen as an outward sign that pointed to deeper cultural and religious values of the community. FGM was seen as an essential initiation to womanhood. According to Nthamburi, it was the duty of the community to prepare its members to become trustworthy persons and circumcision fulfilled this role in society (1991:31).

Muoki (2009:4) points out that the Kikuyu Central Association leaders, notably Jomo Kenyatta and Henry Thuku, ultimately led to the constitution of the African Independent Churches. The one part of the Scottish Presbyterian membership became the African Independent Pentecostal Church. This church championed African culture. It openly supported female genital mutilation and polygamy and listed these as integral parts of its faith and practice (Muoki, 2009:3).



Jomo Kenyatta studied at the Kikuyu Mission Centre. Kenyatta turned down the offer to be trained as a priest and opted to study economics at the London School of Economics (Muoki, 2009:5). However, Kenyatta assumed the role of an African prophet. Kenyatta found in Scriptures customs that were parallel to African rites for example polygamy and ritual sacrifices (Muoki, 2009:5). Kenyatta and other like-minded leaders concluded that the missionaries were biased, hypocritical and untrustworthy. They demanded schools and churches independent of missionary control (Muoki, 2009:5). In 1930, religious leaders as well as other Kikuyu leaders from the central province came up with the *Mithirigu* dance song, which mocked missionaries and colonialists opposed to Female Genital Mutilation. They demanded their own churches and schools so that members could practice Christianity and educate their youth (Muoki, 2009:5). They formed the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association. They constituted various African Independent Churches in Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. The government banned the *Mithirigu* dance in 1930 (Muoki, 2009:5). The African Independent Churches were closely associated with Kikuyu Independent Schools Association and had as a common, namely the freedom to practice polygamy and Female Genital Mutilation (Nthamburi, 1991:31).

The Presbyterian Women's Guild was established in 1922 at Thogoto. Initially it had a role of providing shelter and to girls who left their homes in order to seek education and to escape from Female Genital Mutilation. Muita (2003:61) indicates that by 1962 there were eight Presbyterian councils, with seventeen Women's Guilds had been established across the country. The first African women's Guild leader to be appointed was in 1964 (Muita, 2003:61; Githii, 2009:22-23).

### **3.8. From mission to autonomous church 1956-1968**

The early 1960s signaled the end of missions. What this meant is that the juridical autonomy of the local church was being established in hand with the "Kenyanisation" of the highest position of leadership (Nthamburi, 1991:34). The prevailing aim of this policy was to establish national churches in which mission was subject. Kenya became independent in December 1963. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa became autonomous in 1956, but did not have African leadership until 1961 when Charles Muhoro was elected Moderator and John Gatu became secretary general in (Nthamburi, 1991:34).

The first general Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa met in Nairobi in 1956 and adopted at this gathering its constitution (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:51). For a long period there were two constitutions namely, one for the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and another for the Church of Scotland Overseas Presbytery of Kenya. In 1956, the aforementioned churches merged to form the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

In order to achieve the goal of unity of the two churches, a committee was set up representing St. Andrew's Kirk session, the PCEA presbyteries and the Overseas Councils of the Church of Scotland to formulate proposals, which accepted by all parties (Muita, 2003:51). The committee prepared an agreement of union (*Concordat*). The Overseas Presbytery of the Church of Scotland in Kenya severed its connection with the Church of Scotland to join the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. The General Assembly of the united church was formally inaugurated 11<sup>th</sup> February 1956 at St. Andrew's Church, Nairobi and a new constitution for the church was adopted. Rev. Dr. RGM Calderwood was elected as the first moderator as well as the secretary general of the PCEA (Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 93-94; Muita, 2003:51). The number of missionaries from the Church of Scotland doing mission work in the PCEA reduced during the past decades. In 1961 the first African, Rev. Charles Muhoro was elected as moderator of the General Assembly. He held this for two terms. In 1964, Rev. John Gatu was appointed secretary general, a position previously held by missionaries (Muita, 2003:51).

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa consolidated after the General Assembly held in 1956 as an autonomous Presbyterian church in East Africa. The first matter that needed the attention of the newly established church was the lack of African leadership. There was an acute shortage of well-trained African leaders to take up the mantle of leadership from the missionaries. Muita (2003:59) stresses that the church was committed to education for the clergy, and evidenced this by helping the ministers of the Word to enroll for studies even outside the country.

The PCEA consist currently of 600 ministers of the Word and more than 2,500 congregations in three East Africa countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with about 4 million members. Currently there are 54 presbyteries in Kenya and one in Tanzania. The PCEA is a member of All

Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) National Council of Churches Kenya (NCCCK) World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and World Council of Churches (WCC) since 1956 (Maina, 2015: 39, 51-52).

### **3.9. An overview over the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa**

Already during 1920 a Presbyterian forms of church governance based on the church polity of the Church of Scotland, was introduced in East Africa. The creation of presbyteries led to the formation of Presbyterian Church of East Africa with its own constitution. The first draft of the *Constitution of Presbyterian Church of East Africa* was adopted in 1940. This Constitution allowed the Presbyterian Church of East Africa to be an independent church. The final draft of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa* was ultimately adopted in 1956. This *Constitution* was amended by subsequent General Assemblies and at the Fifth General Assembly in 1967 a revised version was adopted. The *Constitution* contained amongst other the name and jurisdiction of the church, articles declaratory of the fundamental principles of the church, special relationship of PCEA and the Church of Scotland and other Presbyterian churches, regulations on worship, ministry, church polity, property of the church, practice and procedure, rules governing the alteration of the constitution (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita, 2003:51).

The *Constitution of the PCEA* makes provision to regulate the relationship between the Church of Scotland with PCEA (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita, 2003:54). The immediate relationship was to be maintained by a *Concordat* agreed upon by both the PCEA and Church of Scotland. The *Concordat* stipulated that the following relations be maintained between the two churches for example:

- a) The Union between the PCEA Synod and the Overseas Presbytery of the Church of Scotland was to unify all branches of the church.
- b) The PCEA would take care to ensure spiritual welfare of the members of the Church of Scotland in East Africa, as outlined in Article 8 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.
- c) The PCEA recognized that it was in filial relationship with the Church of Scotland, and that it would seek its counsel and guidance.
- d) A constitution of St. Andrew's Church, as set by the United Church was accepted by the

Church of Scotland, that it would provide a model constitution of similar congregations, when set up elsewhere in East Africa. The congregation was given the mandate and authority to run its affairs, and the right to call its ministers of the Word from either the PCEA or the Church of Scotland, or any other Church, which the PCEA was in full communion, provided the approval was obtained from the Presbytery.

- e) Certain properties held by the Church of Scotland Trust would remain as until the PCEA was able to take full responsibility for their maintenance.
- f) Recognizing that PCEA was not yet able to discharge full responsibility for all the work carried on by the Church of Scotland in East Africa, the General Assembly resolved to continue close co-operation with the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, acting through their colonial and Continental and Foreign Mission committees to supply staff and solicit funds for evangelistic, medical and educational work.
- g) PCEA would continue to seek fraternal assistance of the Church of Scotland through its appropriate committees in promoting ecumenical relations with other churches, through membership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches. In any approach to a wider church union in East Africa, the PCEA would seek the counsel and help of the Church of Scotland.
- h) The PCEA invited ministers of the Word and elders of the Church of Scotland and other churches with which they were in full communion, residing within its bounds and who were willing to maintain its constitution, to enter its ministry and eldership (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita, 2003:51).

Muita (2003:68) indicates that the Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (1956) was significant in cementing African leadership in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. During the Assembly, the *Constitution of the PCEA* was amended significantly. Subsequently amendments were to the *Practice and Procedure* made by the Assemblies of 1958, 1961, and 1964. The book on *Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* provides a description of the functions of the ecclesiastical assemblies as well as the functions and the responsibilities of office-bearers.

The *Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* stipulated how the General Assembly would be constituted. Rules on election of the commissioners to the General Assembly were set. These also included on how the office-bearers of the General Assembly would be chosen. Another matter that was approved at the first General Assembly of the PCEA was on the delimitation of Presbytery boundaries. The General Assembly recognized eight Presbyteries. The Fifth General Assembly of PCEA approved procedures of setting up the General Administrative Committee and other committees for ease of management of church affairs. The General Assembly also approved the appointment of Hospital Boards and the establishment of a Finance Committee to prepare an annual budget for PCEA (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita, 2003:70).

The declaratory of the fundamental principles of the PCEA in the *Constitution of the PCEA* states that the Presbyterian Church of East Arica is part of the Holy Catholic Church, worships the Triune God, affirms Christ as the Head over all things in His Church and affirms that the Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the supreme rule of faith and life (*Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* 1998:1). All Presbyterian ministers of the Word, licentiates, elders, lay leaders, certified evangelists and church sisters of the PCEA and all ministers and elders of their Churches who enter any court of the PCEA or hold office therein should subscribe to a Formula which states the following: “I belief in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in Article 1 of Declaratory of the Fundamental Principles of the PCEA. I accept the form of Government of the PCEA and the forms of worship of the customary in the PCEA as agreeable to the Word of God, and I promise to adhere to the same.” (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita 2003:72).

The *Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* also provides a variety of forms and formulae used in the PCEA for various activities. Various acts and resolutions on procedural matters preceding from the General Assemblies are incorporated in the *Practice and Procedure*. Chapter five of the *Constitution of the PCEA* states that the government of the denomination is Presbyterian. The government of the PCEA according to the Presbyterian usage is committed to the ministers of the Word, duly associated with the courts of the church, namely the kirk session, Presbyteries and a General Assembly.

Article four of the *Constitution of the RCEA* states that the government of the PCEA is exercised through parish sessions, presbyteries, regional councils and the general assembly. The fundamental principles of this government are that “the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one church of Christ, called emphatically the church, that a larger part of the church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller part determine matters of controversy which arise therein; that in like manner, a representation of the whole should govern the and determine in regard to very part, and to all the parts united; that is, the majority shall govern consequently, that appeals may be carried from lower to higher governing bodies, until they are finally decided by collective wisdom and united voice of the whole church” (*Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* 1998:4 ).

The congregations of the PCEA are organized into parishes. The latter forms presbyteries. The kirk session is made of elders and the ministers of the Word residing in the parish. The kirk session is responsible to the presbytery. The minister of the Word is the moderator of the kirk session, while an elder is elected as the clerk. The parish is headed parish minister of the Word while presbytery is headed by presbytery moderator elected among parish ministers in the parishes within presbytery. The presbytery exercises supervision of all ministers. The moderator of General Assembly elected by the presbyteries (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Maika, 2015:41, 51) heads the business committee, the General administrative committee and General Assembly.

The presbytery on the other hand is the representative body that governs a number of parishes in a given area. It exercises supervision of all ministers of the Word, kirk session, church agents and the congregations within its bounds. It licenses students of theology as preachers of the gospel, ordains ministers of the Word and admits them to their charges. It performs all duties delegated to upon it by the General Assembly, and gives effect to all laws passed by the General Assembly. The Presbytery elects a moderator from among its ministerial members, and a clerk from among the ministers of the Word and elders within its jurisdiction (*Constitution of the PCEA*; Muita, 2003:51).

The General Assembly is the supreme court of the church” (*Constitution of the PCEA*). The General Assembly of the PCEA meets once every three years. The decisions of the General

Council in all matters are final. At the conclusion of the each statutory meeting, the General Assembly elects a General Purpose Committee (GAC) to carry out the work of the church from one General Assembly to the next, its decisions and actions are always subject to review by the General Assembly. A moderator is elected from among the ministerial members of the church, to preside over their deliberations and to hold office for such a time as the General Assembly may determine. Clerks of the General Assembly are also elected for such a period as the General Assembly may determine to help its running (Githii, 2009:22-23).

### **3.10. Conclusion**

Without a good overview of the history of the PCEA and the constitution of this denomination, a critical conversation on church judicial matters of the Reformed Church of East Africa will not be possible. The chapter indicates how the socio-political context influenced the mission endeavors in Kenya as well as the constitutional developments of the PCEA. The historical background of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa highlights that already during 1920 -1945 Africans took over the leadership in the denominations. The ordination of the first African ministers of the Word occurred as early as in 1926. The creation of presbyteries led to the formation of Presbyterian Church of East Africa with its own constitution. The Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (1956) played a huge role cementing African leadership in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Henceforward, Africans were chosen in leadership positions of the PCEA.

The research findings in Chapter 3 will aid an understanding of the church polity developments of the Reformed Church of East Africa. When the latter became autonomous in 1963, it was obliged to register as a voluntary association/foundation with the government of the republic of Kenya. As the RCEA had no constitution of their own and the matter was considered one of urgency, church authorities decided to adopt and adapt the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa*. The researcher will attend to the church judicial development of the Reformed Church in East Africa in chapter 4.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FROM MISSION STATION TO AUTONOMOUS REFORMED CHURCH IN EAST AFRICA

#### 4.1. Introduction

In order to understand the church judicial developments of the Reformed Church in East Africa (RCEA) it is important to have a clear understanding of the history of RCEA. The Dutch Reformed missionaries, the Reformed Mission League (RML) as well as the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa played a pivotal role in the judicial development of the RCEA. In this chapter, emphasis will be laid on the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya (DRC) from 1904 to 1961. The reformed foundations of the RCEA were laid during this period. In this section, we will also examine the church judicial development of the RCEA. Secondly, attention will be given to the phase when the Dutch Reformed Church left Kenya and the Reformed Mission League came into the scene. The Reformed Mission League built on the foundations already laid by the Dutch Reformed Church. It had the dual task of both consolidating the gains already made and expanding the ministry that had already been started. During this phase, the RCEA adopted their Constitution, which was built on the *Constitution of the PCEA*. The period that the Reformed Mission League got involved with the RCEA stretches from 1961 to 1980, when the RCEA took full charge of its ministry.

#### 4.2. Mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya (1904-1944)

The RCEA is part of the wider family of churches known to us as the Reformed churches. These churches have their roots and origin in the protestant reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The RCEA has been in Kenya for close to a century since the first missionaries founded it in a consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC). This took place on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1908 outside Nakuru on the farm of Mr. Arnoldi. This founding and naming of the congregation was led by Rev. Theunissen and Rev. Louw, who felt that the people had travelled far enough from the “mother church” in South Africa and hence needed to settle. This congregation was thus named Vergenoeg congregation which when translated means ‘far enough’ (c.f. Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 94-95; Van Zyl, 2001:65). According to Van Oene (2007:238) “mother church” usually refers to “a new church formed by part of its members, but this does not give the first church any authority over “its daughter.” As soon as the new church is instituted there are two



sister churches, equal in every respect, except most likely in the size of membership. Van Oene (2007:238) affirms that there is “only one Master, only Head and universal Bishop, the One who bought His Bride, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Afrikaans was the language of communication of the Reformed church ministering to Afrikaners residing in Kenya. The Vergenoeg congregation utilized the church order of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The white farmers did mission work amongst the indigenous farm workers on their farms (Ham, 1992:28). This outreach was not directed at the founding of a church but was largely an effort to share the Gospel. This informal mission endeavours took place from around 1906 to 1932. In 1932, the DRC decided to establish the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission to organize the outreach work done by the farmers. Over time, it became more difficult and complex for the farmers to carry their mission work. This led to the calling of the first missionary, the Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers, in 1944. This ultimately led to church planting and to the establishment of an independent African church. Kiswahili was introduced as a language of the church (Bisem, 1983:8-9).

The establishment of the Reformed church in Kenya can be traced back to as far as 1905 when the first South African settlers arrived in Kenya via Tanzania. This was in response to the call by the East African Governments. The South African Boers moved into Kenya because of several reasons. One of the reasons was economic. There was the promise of cheap and available arable land. The land was suitable for commercial farming and was attractive to the farmers who had faced huge challenges, particularly after the second Anglo-Boer or the South Africa war (1899-1902). The war resulted in a land that was denuded and scorched and a people who were devastated and embittered (Du Toit, 1998:27). According to Du Toit (1998:28) agriculture in the Transvaal and Orange Free State was severely destroyed. The majority of the South Africans who came to East Africa were farmers who had been adversely affected by the war. The post war depression and the terrible state of the land after the war, together with the promise of cheap, fertile land and available labour was a great temptation for these farmers to trek eastwards. Above all, there was the invitation by Sir Charles Elliot, the commissioner for the East Africa protectorate, who advertised the agricultural potential and availability of land in East Africa. It was under such conditions that the idea of moving abroad and living away from the British became attractive and

appealing; particularly to the Boer nationalists who could not bring themselves to thinking that they could be under the control of the British. This was also attractive to those who felt that they had been rejected by their own brethren and including the in the church. One other reason the Boers trekked out of South Africa was majorly political. During the two centuries that marked their expansion within the borders of what is today the republic of South Africa, the Boers had formed several independent republics. These included Natalia, Orange Free State and South African republic among others. This seems to have been the motive as they trekked in German East Africa (Du Toit 1998:39). Essentially, this trek was also seen as a frontier expansion of the South Africa republic (Du Toit, 1998:39).

The other reason given for the outward trek from South Africa was the strong anti-British sentiments. Many of those who trekked into German East Africa did so because they did not wish to be under the British flag. Ever since the British moved into the Cape colony, the trekkers kept on moving northwards in an attempt to move away. Even, in the case where they moved into British East Africa, they did so out of the knowledge and expectation that there would be enough space and few British administrators. It has been suggested that the Boer trekkers not only trekked for the above stated reasons but also for the sheer pleasure of it. A British Administrator Elspeth Huxley (1957:57) speaking of the early Afrikaner settlers, says:

They did not dream of making fortunes as the English did; all they asked was freedom and solitude. They craved no luxuries, sought society only now and then.... They lived off the country shooting their meat, salting and drying it for journeys, trading hides with Africans for gain, using roots for coffee, tanning their own leather from game they shot and if they needed money for a new shirt and trousers, driving ox teams for a few shillings-Dutchmen were born, it seemed to handle oxen, with a whip in their hands as it was said- until they got all they needed and then perhaps moving on, for at heart they were nomads and wanderers.

The desire to trek is also given a spiritual dimension. According to Loubser, as cited in Du Toit (1998:40), the strange and powerful urge of the trekkers came from Jehovah and had not been for this spirit; there would be no Afrikaner history. He goes on to say that man cannot explain why

that tendency is always present. In other words, the trek was not only a political protest against the intrusion of a colonial master in the name of the British, but also a spiritual journey in search of the Promised Land, for they saw themselves acting as guided by God (Du Toit, 1998:40).

In summary, it would be fair to say that the post-war conditions pushed the Boers to trek out of South Africa in search of better agricultural land, the need to live away from the oppressive British regime. The urge to be independent and need to escape from the shame of being ostracised by one's own brethren and rejected by the church contributed greatly to move to faraway lands. This was also fanned by the Afrikaner's pioneer spirit. Many of the trekkers moved into far flung lands such as Canada, Russia and India, and also moved into the northern hinterland of Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and into the Eastern part of Africa such as Tanzania and Kenya in East Africa (Van Zyl, 2001:45). The majority of those who moved into East Africa were from the Transvaal and the Free State regions.

As the Boers moved out of South Africa into East Africa, those who were responsible (Dutch Reformed Church) for the pastoral well-being of church members made attempts to keep their flock together and to protect them from wandering both physically and spiritually too far from the church. As the trekkers moved, the Dutch Reformed Church took note of their move and was gravely concerned of their well-being (Du Toit, 1998:127).

It was under such conditions and circumstances that the reformed church was founded in Kenya. As already indicated earlier, it should be emphasized that the birth of the reformed church in Kenya was not a direct result of the work of the Synod of Transvaal as was the case of Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia; rather, it was as a result of the work of those emigrants, mainly reformed Christians, who had brought their faith and religion with them. They endeavoured to live their Christian lives and were effective witnesses for their faith (Du Toit, 1998:127).

The first congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church in East Africa was established in Meru Tanzania on 30th September 1905. The boundaries of this congregation were the whole of Tanganyika, the present day Tanzania. This congregation was established mainly to serve members of the Afrikaner communities who had settled in the Meru region (around Mt Meru).

This congregation was served by temporary ministers of the Word for 40 years, whose duty was to mainly visit, preach the gospel and administer sacraments, that is, carry out baptism and serve Holy Communion. They had also to assist the members grow in their faith through catechism instruction and help in establishing a congregation and a school. The earlier visiting ministers of the Word had the additional duty of negotiating with the German authorities for land for the purposes of establishing schools and building churches for the congregations (Du Toit, 1998:127).

From the very beginning, the congregation was established in keeping with the Presbyterian/Reformed roots of church structure and organization. An equal number of Elders and Deacons were elected to serve this congregation (Du Toit, 1998:127). This formed the council, which was responsible for all matters concerning the congregation. These included general management issues and pastoral oversight activities, including the visiting of the sick and church discipline.

Despite the fact that this congregation existed for more than 40 years, it seems that it did not thrive, as it ought to have. Its success was hindered by a combination of factors, including and not limited to the hostility exhibited towards it by the Germans, particularly during the First World War. The other factor was the seemingly unsuitable climate that was not conducive for agriculture. The farmers had poor harvests and many of them lost their livestock to diseases and severe drought. It has been suggested that the Afrikaners preferred to be under the British control away from home and resented the Germans (Van Zyl, 2001:47).

A second Dutch Reformed Church congregation was established on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1908. This was the Vergenoeg<sup>11</sup> congregation, whose boundaries extended to the whole of British East African territory. These two congregations were followed by the Nairobi congregation and the Loubser congregation in Nakuru. These congregations in East Africa became part of the presbytery of Lydenberg of the Transvaal Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (Van Zyl, 2001:49). These congregations were established where the farmers had settled. Worship was conducted in the farms

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<sup>11</sup>Vergenoeg is an Afrikaans word that roughly translated means “far enough” The farmers had come far enough and needed to settle and start work.

before church buildings were constructed. They were set up to meet the spiritual needs of the farmers and not intended to reach the local populations.

In response to the spiritual needs of its members, the Foreign Missions Committee encouraged the founding of congregations wherever its people settled. As the trekkers crossed into German East Africa (the present day Tanzania) and into British East Africa (present day Kenya), the church took the initiative which eventually led to the establishment of the Meru congregation in Tanzania and the Vergenoeg and Loubser congregations in Kenya (c.f. *Vergenoeg Church Council minutes - 1908-1975*).

It is important to note here that these congregations were not entirely supervised by one minister of the Word. The ministers of the Word from the various reformed churches in South Africa visited and ministered to their various congregations differently. The three main streams were the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), the Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Reformed church of Africa) and the Gereformeerde Kerken Suid Afrika (Reformed Church in South Africa). The latter had separated from the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1850s. It was not clear to the local populations what the differences between the different reformed churches were (Bisem, 1983:4).

#### **4.2.1. Mission work among the indigenous populations**

There is an underlying concept that the Dutch Reformed Church always followed its members wherever they went. Where they went the church went with them. When the first settlers came to South Africa from the Netherlands, they were accompanied by the sick comforters and from time to time ministers of the Word would travel to administer sacraments, until such a time when congregations were ready to call ministers of the Word (Pillay, 1991:250-252). Moreover, the members always felt a personal obligation to evangelise or at least to share the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever they went. Examples abound where the DRC moved with its people. As the trekkers moved north of the Limpopo into Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, the Foreign Missions committee of the DRC made great efforts to understand the spiritual circumstances and needs of its members, an endeavour that led to the establishment of the congregation of Bulawayo on 16<sup>th</sup>

September 1890 (Van Zyl, 2000:49). Other congregations were founded along the same lines for example South West Africa in 1902 and Lusaka Zambia 1919 (Van Zyl, 2000:49).

The settlers who had settled in Meru region in Tanzania were not very successful in their farming enterprises. Many of them moved out of the German-controlled Tanzania into the British controlled Kenya. Most of them settled in Uasin Gishu with altitude of between 1829 and 2743 meters above sea level. This region was suitable for agricultural purposes. The weather at the equator provided warm weather throughout the year, which was like a permanent summer to the settlers. The colonial government helped the farmers to get land from the indigenous people by annexing it. The indigenous people were pushed into the unproductive areas known as “native reserves.” As they were pushed into these unproductive lands, the local populations were deprived off their livelihood. The government forced these local populations to work in the farms by introducing different types of taxes that had to be paid. Some of these taxes included “hut” tax and “poll tax” (Ochieng, 1985:87). These taxes were to be paid in cash. In this way, the local populations were forced to work in the farms for cash in order to pay government taxes. In this way, the farmers got cheap labour from the local communities.

As the emigrants settled, they were joined by the members of the tribes that had been pushed into the reserves by the colonial government, who, because of poverty and the many taxes that they were required to pay, needed to work in the farms. These men and women were employed to work in the farms of the new settlers. It is this relationship, established between the settlers and the surrounding communities that opened doors for the bringing of the gospel by the farmers. The relationship that existed between the farmers and the local communities was that of employer versus employee. This was also manifest in the church that was established. The farmers recognised their Christian and spiritual obligation as Christians towards the spiritual welfare of the local community. This zeal got more impetus with the calling and the subsequent arrival of Rev M. P. Loubser at the Vergenoeg Congregation in Eldoret in 1909. He had oversight on other congregations as well: Nairobi, Loubser and Meru. His stay was interrupted from time to time by bad health. He left two years later and was later called back in 1925. He passed away in 1942. His influence on outreach to the farm labourers has a lasting impact. He encouraged members of the Vergenoeg Congregation to take up evangelism of the indigenous people especially those who

worked in the farms. He organised prayers for the labourers in the different farms. Members of his congregation, namely A. J. Mouton and J. K. Boshoff followed his lead (Van Zyl, 2000:53).

The number of labourers who became Christians grew. As a result, it became of utmost importance to appoint a minister of the Word who would specifically be in charge of mission to the labourers and the indigenous people. This required a full time person who would be able to organise Sunday services and administer the sacraments. The local members were not allowed to worship together with the farmers. A form of racial segregation was followed (*RCEA 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report*, 2003:5). Two factors speed up the process of the calling of a missionary. Firstly, the closing of the school for the children of the South African farmers in the early 1940s at Broederstroom speed up the process.<sup>12</sup> The school was moved to the Hill School in Eldoret. The colonial government had designated Broederstroom to be used for religious purposes only and it could therefore not be used for anything else. The facilities at Broederstroom were suitable for a mission station. The Vergenoeg Congregation decided to use them to establish a mission station to reach out to the local population (*Vergenoeg Church Council minutes - 1908- 1975*). The mission station was renamed Bwana Loubser Mission.<sup>13</sup>

The second factor that accelerated the calling of a missionary was the unfortunate death of Rev. M. P. Loubser in 1942. He made a bequest of \$220 to be used by the Vergenoeg Congregation for mission work amongst the indigenous people. During his lifetime Rev. Loubser shown a lot of concern for mission work to the indigenous people (Cronje, 1982:181). Based on the above factors the Vergenoeg Congregation decided to call a missionary with a salary limit of \$600 per annum. The congregation also decided to form a local mission committee that was named “the Vergenoeg Mission Fraternal of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of the Transvaal.” This committee was to spearhead the mission work of the congregation. The Vergenoeg Congregation also decided that the buildings of the old Broederstroom School should be made available for a mission station. The

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<sup>12</sup> Broederstroom is the current Plateau Mission Station. This mission station currently houses four institutions, namely the Plateau Mission Hospital, Plateau Primary School, Plateau Girls Secondary school and Maranatha Local Church. Plateau Mission station became the headquarters of the mission work in the RCEA for a long time.

<sup>13</sup> The word ‘Bwana’ means ‘Lord’. It was commonly used by the indigenous people to mean ‘lord’ when they addressed the white settler. Bwana Loubser Mission was used to distinguish this congregation from the white DRC congregation established earlier.

bequest of Rev. Loubser motivated the Vergenoeg Congregation seriously attend to do mission work on a more structured way (Cronje, 1982:181).

#### **4.2.2. Towards an Indigenous African congregation**

It was not until the calling of Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers that a full-scale ministry to the indigenous people was embarked upon. The induction of Rev. Eybers was done on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945 at the renamed Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station. In 1945, a decision was taken to rename Broederstroom in honour of Rev. MP Loubser for his dedication and commitment that he had shown to mission work, which included the bequest in support of mission work. Rev. Eybers at first done a general assessment with regard to the outreach amongst the indigenous people. The outcome of this assessment was that although the local population working in farms and living around Plateau was about 100,000, only 5% were Christianized (Van Zyl, 2000:63). Eybers proposed to adopt the mission strategies of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission applied in other mission fields such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This strategy consisted of:

- a) Putting a main emphasis in the proclamation of the Word of God.
- b) This was to be followed by literacy programmes.
- c) Issues on health and hygiene were also to be given some priority.
- d) Moral instruction was also given prominence in the new situation.
- e) Lessons and some encouragements on agriculture were to be given.

The DRC decided to draft a mission policy at a conference held in 1931 in Kroonstad, Free State (Giliomee, 2003:459). This policy was officially promulgated in 1935 as the official mission policy of the DRC. Language, customs, culture and colour became determinants of the Policy (Ibid: 459; Pauw 1980:49). In the preamble of the policy, the DRC expresses that it was “God who ordained that the first European inhabitants should be the bearers of the light of the gospel to the ‘heathens’ of the continent.” The *DRC Mission Policy 1935* is made up of the following sections.

- a) The in gathering of souls for God’s Kingdom.
- b) The founding of congregations.
- c) The development of a church, which eventually achieves self-support and self-government.



- d) Proved accessory means are educational, medical, agricultural and other activities.
- e) Aspirations of the new converts to improve their conditions have to be directed along the right course.
- f) Evangelisation however does not presuppose de-nationalization (Van Zyl, 2000:49; *DRC Mission Policy* 1935).

The white farmers considered them called to proclaim the gospel to the ‘heathens’ of the Kenya. The mission policy of the DRC was strictly observed by Rev. Eybers (*Vergenoeg LMC* 24/03/45; Van Zyl, 2001:97). Rev. Eybers and his wife, J de Villiers, set out their work in Kenya amidst many challenges. Firstly the indigenous people around the Plateau were mainly the Elgeyo<sup>14</sup> who were not able to speak Afrikaans, which was the main language used by the Boers. They spoke Keiyo and some Swahili languages. Rev. Eybers and his wife undertook to learn the common language, Kiswahili, which was used widely among the farm workers as the first step of preparing to carry out their mission mandate. Among the farm workers were also other tribes, like the Luhya, Kikuyu, Turkana among others, whose main means of communication was Kiswahili language, a common language spoken in most parts of the country.

Different tribes worked in the farms and Kiswahili was the only language that could be used. He and his wife showed a remarkable ability to learn languages. Within a very short time, they were able to communicate effectively in Kiswahili with the congregation. They carried out a translation

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<sup>14</sup> The Keiyo is one of the Kalenjin Communities that include, among others, the Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen, Marakwet, Kony (Sabiny/Saboi), Pokot (Suk), Sengwer, Okiek and Terik. The name ‘Kalenjin’ was coined to cover these communities because it is common among them and it means, “I say to you”, “I told you”, “I did like this to you” or “let me tell you.” ‘Elgeyo’ is a corruption of the word ‘Keiyo’ which means for or from Keiyo land. During the pre-colonial days the Keiyo occupied the valley whose name (was Keiyo). When the colonialists asked a Keiyo where he came from the reply was “Oleb Keiyo” meaning “this side of Keiyo.” Elgeyo could have also been coined by the Uasin Gishu Maasai, the Kipwopchek, who normally added the letters El to the names of places where they had settled such as Elgarini, Eldama-Ravine and Eldoret as well as Olessoss. One of the earliest British Colonial District Commissioners for Elgeiyo Marakwet, J.A Massam who wrote a book in 1927 about the Keiyo called “The Cliff Dwellers of Kenya”, referred to the Keiyo as Elgeyo or Il Kiyu. He wrote that the Elgeyo is a mixture of people who came to the area from all directions and divided the land among themselves in sections extending from the highlands down the escarpments and into the valley floor. Originally, there were sixteen sections inhabited by matrilineal clans divided into several exogamic totem groups. The Kalenjin, particularly the Kipsigis believe they descended from a mythical ancestor called Miot. According to Toweett (1979), the Elgeyo are a sub-tribe of Myoot (Kalenjin) who remained behind in Kerio Valley when other Kalenjin groups moved through Mt Elgon to their current respective settlement areas. According to Ogot, Bethwell, A. & Ochieng’ William R. (eds) (1995) the Kalenjin must have been a distinct ethnic group about a thousand years ago and the general area among Southern Sudan, Southern Ethiopian, Highlands and Lake Turkana.

of the basic Christian literature, which they used for the instruction of the church members. After sometime, they were able to translate the following:

- a) Habari za kale (lessons from the Old Testament),
- b) Masomo ya Habari Bwana Yesu (lessons from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ),
- c) Katekisma (Catechism) - By 1945 the translation of the "Katekisma" was completed. The "Katekisma", was revised and extended, and published in Kiswahili in 1963 (*RML Annual report 1963*: 131 & 1964:89),
- d) Nyimbo za Mulungu (hymnbook) - On 27 June 1948 the hymnbook was translated into Kiswahili was taken into use. New hymns with African melodies were added to the hymn collection during 1970 (*RML Annual report 1970*:25).
- e) Habari za kanisa (Church History),
- f) Mwenge (a fortnightly newsletter) (Cronje, 1982:18; Van Zyl, 2001:141).

During 1959, Rev. Eybers was in the final stages of preparing the translation of the Church Order and the Three Forms of Unity for printing. Rev. J.P. Theron undertook to get the materials ready to be set in book form (*Vergenoeg LMC* 10102/59).

One of the huge challenges Rev. Eybers faced was the lack of trained personnel to help in the work that was before him. Most of the indigenous people were illiterate. In the initial years, the Rev. Eybers relied on Tanzanian teachers to carry out the role of evangelists, who at the same time acted as translators. His vision was to recruit local people to be trained as evangelists. This was a challenge that would take a long time to overcome. The first members to be recruited and trained as evangelists were Jason Wamukota, Hubert Tibanga and Jeremiah Lugumira. The three were later ordained as the first African ministers of the Word in 1956. Others trained as evangelists included Festo Okonyene, Joshua Bibiko and William Welime (Du Toit, 1998:145).

In line with the *Mission Policy of the DRC*, outstations were started away from the main mission station at Bwana Loubser Sending Mission. These outstations were used as schools as well as churches. These schools were managed by teacher-evangelists who were trained and guided by Rev. Eybers at the main mission station at Bwana Loubser Sending Mission. The teacher-evangelists were recruited from among the local populations. This move greatly enhanced outreach

since these teacher-evangelists were readily accepted by their own people. They spoke the local languages and they played a critical role in starting of new outstations.

The *DRC Mission Policy of 1935* would have far-reaching effects in the way mission would be done from then onwards (Verstraelen-Gilhuis, 1982:206-207). In the case of the mission to Kenya, the Classis of Lydenburg would be asked to give financial support to boost the local efforts of the Vergenoeg Congregation. Rev. Eybers had argued for the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission to be treated as a foreign mission and not as home mission field. This would have given the work a boost that would have guaranteed financial support and helped the work to grow and expand. Nevertheless, his argument was turned down; for it was thought that time was not ripe. This was in spite of the spirited argument of Rev. Eybers that communication between East Africa and the Union of South Africa was wrought with many challenges and barriers, which would slow down mission work. The refusal by the Transvaal Synod to treat Kenya as a foreign mission negated in a way the mission policy cited above. It also denied the mission the necessary financial support that would have helped the new church in Kenya to grow towards self-reliance. This stance was later to affect the growth of mission in Kenya, and by the time the DRC left Kenya in 1960, the church had not been firmly grounded in the Kenyan soil. One reason that is given for the handing over the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission to the Reformed Mission League, later in 1960, is the poor financial state of the mission.

#### **4.2.3. The relationship between Bwana Loubser Sending Mission and the local community**

In his work, Bisem (1983:7) claims that the Apartheid policy which was replicated in Kenya. According to Bisem (1983:10), the situation of discrimination is further illustrated by the three different congregations that were established around Eldoret by the Dutch Reformed Church, namely the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (Hervormde Kerk in Afrika) and the Reformed Church in South Africa (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika). The South Africans worshipped in a “Whites only church”. (Bisem, 1983:11). According to Bisem, the three congregations represented the views that South Africans held regarding the black populations. The Hervormde Kerk’s (Reformed Church in Africa) church building was later handed over to the Presbyterian Church East Africa. The Reformed Church in South Africa (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika) handed over its church buildings to

the African Inland Church. The Vergenoeg Congregation handed over its buildings to the African Gospel Church.

In 2001, Van Zyl refutes the above argument of Bisem. He shows that the three congregations were in fact separated even before they came to Kenya at the beginning of the century. According to Van Zyl (2001:60) the churches merely did what they had already done in South Africa. The question of separate churches is a fact. However, he cautions that it should be remembered that it was these very South Africans who brought the good news to Kenya, when they made concerted efforts in the 1930s to reach out to the labourers in their farms and preached to them Van Zyl (2001:60).

While one can understand the argument of Van Zyl, the challenge was the continuation of the white DRC Vergenoeg congregation as a separate church. The Vergenoeg Congregation continued to worship, conduct its service in the Afrikaans language. The Vergenoeg Congregation never merged with the RCEA. It is very difficult to explain to the local reformed members, even today, why these church buildings were handed over to other churches while the members of the Reformed Church of East Africa had no places to use for worship. Above-mentioned actions reinforce the view of racial discrimination executed by the white farmers in Kenya.

One should keep in mind that in South Africa the DRC constituted three racial segregated churches constituted, namely in 1881 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) for people of mixed decent, in 1910 the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) for people from African decent and in 1963 Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) for people from Indian background. According to Leepo Modise (2013:120) at the synod of the DRC in South Africa in 1857, separate services for “coloured” members of the church were approved. This decision reads as follows:

Whether Synod approves that in the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church, where the desire exists, coloureds can enjoy all privileges of the Christian religion separately in a separate building, but under the administration and supervision of the church council ... The Synod considers it desirable and according to the Holy Scripture that heathen members (non-whites) be accepted and initiated into the congregations of the DRC wherever it is possible;

but where this measure, as a result of the weakness of some, would stand in the way of promoting the work of Christ among the heathen people, then congregations set up among the heathen, or still to be set up, should enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building or institution (Leepo, 2013:120).

Between 1881 and up to April 1994, four racially divided churches came into being in South Africa, namely in 1881, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) was established as a separate church for people of mixed descent, the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA, for Indians), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (for Africans). According to Modise for the first decades following the establishment of the racially segregated churches, the DRC kept the veto power over decisions made by the mission churches (2013:120). With the constitution of the RCEA the power resided mainly in the hands of the missionaries.

#### **4.2.4 Eybers' ministry at the Bwana Loubser Mission**

Rev. Eybers made major efforts to have good relationships with other churches in the region where he served. The predominant churches in the region were the Roman Catholic Church, which came to Kenya in 1860, African Inland Church which arrived in the country in 1895, the Church of the Province of Kenya (present day Anglican Church of Kenya) which took root in Kenya in 1884 and the Quakers in 1902 (Van Zyl, 2001:76). Rev. Eybers represented the Bwana Loubser Mission at the ecumenical council, where the Dutch Reformed church was also a member. Great efforts were made to ensure that the Dutch Reformed doctrine was not compromised during their ecumenical encounters in Kenya. Both Rev. Loubser and Rev. Eybers rejected the use of literature from other organisations for the training of their members. In the mission schools only approved instructional materials could be utilized.

The calling of Rev. Eybers in 1944 marked a turning point in the history of reformed mission in Kenya. Until this time, the work of reaching out to the local population was not coordinated. With the coming of Rev. Eybers, the mission committee was set up by the Vergenoeg Congregation. This committee was responsible to coordinate the work of the Bwana Loubser Mission. The new station was treated as an inland mission and not as a foreign mission (Du Toit, 1998:142). The Vergenoeg Congregation was the sending mission while the Bwana Loubser church was the

planted church. The Bwana Loubser Mission was treated as a mission field of the DRC in South Africa.

One of the major tasks that Rev. Eybers undertook was training evangelists and pastors. This was a very difficult task. In 1952, three students were enrolled in the four-year course at the mission station. Other Reformed Dutch ministers of the Word assisted Rev. Eybers. The three students, Jeremiah Luguja, Jason Wamukota and Hubert Tibanga, graduated in 1956 and were ordained on 16<sup>th</sup> September in the same year. They become the first African pastors to serve in the church (*RCEA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report*, 1983:22). Of the three, only Jason Wamukota was from Kenya. The two, Hubert Tibanga and Jeremiah Lugumira, were from Bukoba Tanzania. The latter had no link with the Meru congregation work in Tanzania. Evidence on the outreach by the South African farmers in Meru region is very scanty. The lack of enthusiasm by the farmers in Meru region in Tanzania could have been brought about by the lack of a full-time minister of the Word, and the fact that these farmers were faced with many challenges and many of them moved to Kenya or returned to South Africa. The three ministers of the Word played a significant role of nurturing the young RCEA to a mature church.

During this period (1954-1963), the roots of what was to become Reformed Church of East Africa were firmly put in place. The year 1959 was significant in the history of the establishment of the African church. Three congregations were formally constituted during 1959 and African ministers of the Word posted to these congregations. These were the Bwana Loubser Mission congregation, established on August 1959 with Rev. Jason Wamukota as minister of the Word; the Eldoret West Congregation, established on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1959 with Rev. Jeremiah Lugumira as its minister as well as the Trans-Nzoia congregation was inaugurated on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1959, with Rev. Hubert Tibanga as the minister of the Word. The Synod was that of Reformed Church in North Rhodesia, present day Zambia, while the classis was Bwana Loubser Mission station (Van Zyl, 2001:87). Another major and significant step was the recruitment and training of teacher-evangelists. These were recruited from among the local populations. They had basic education and were able to preach in the local languages after receiving some training that ranged from six months to one year. Rev. Eybers and the Dutch Reformed ministers of the Word who served the Vergenoeg Congregation

also trained them (Van Zyl, 2001:83). The evangelists were instrumental in the mission in far-flung villages. They were also teachers in the schools that were established.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the young mission faced new challenges. Foremost amongst them was the expansion of the outreach to other areas beyond Uasin Gishu District. There were attempts to reach the Turkana in 1951. This venture became impossible, even when there was great need of establishing the church, as was indicated by the requests of Evangelist Lowoto and the District Commissioner (Van Zyl, 2001:84). There were also financial needs to support the various schools established by the church across the Uasin Gishu and the Trans-Nzoia Districts. Another factor that needs to be considered was the dwindling fortunes of the Vergenoeg Congregation. The membership of this congregation had dropped drastically and so were the financial resources. The members were reducing by the day as independence days approached. Many of the South African farmers were leaving in large numbers. Many of the farmers were returning to South Africa and hence the congregation could no longer sustain the budget of the mission, since expenses were increasing and the income reducing. This greatly affected the financial viability of the congregation. Many of the farmers left because of the activities of the *Mau Mau* during the 1950s, which resulted in the disillusionment of and uncertainty among the white settlers. The South African farmers were not targeted but many feared for their future and their lives and they began the trek back to their home in South Africa (Du Toit, 1998:144). Hence, there were attempts to look elsewhere to carry on the work already started.

Another aggravating matter was the eminent retirement of Rev. Eybers and his wife in 1960 and the financial crisis facing the Vergenoeg congregation and the Bwana Loubser Mission (*Vergenoeg Church Council minutes - 1908-1975*; Van Zyl, 2001:14). From this time on the fate of RCEA took a different turn. The young mission was faced with an acute financial crisis and the only missionary that had served it for almost two decades was leaving without a replacement. The future looked bleak and uncertain. The country was fast tracking towards national independence. According to Bisem (1983:34) the returning farmers who were concerned with the future of the young growing church encouraged the members of the Bwana Loubser Mission to join the neighbouring African Inland Church, since the mission station in their view was going to close



down. The members resisted this move and eventually, by the grace of God, the Reformed Mission League came into the scene (Bisem, 1983:34).

From the early beginnings, the missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church adhered to the reformed traditions and confessions (Van Zyl, 2001:78). In the process of the establishment of the Reformed church in Kenya, great care was taken to ensure that the reformed traditions were followed. This is clearer from the period 1944 onwards when the first missionary was called. The arrival of Rev. Eybers and his wife signalled a serious attention that was paid to this matter.

In the first instance, the missionaries investigated the possibility of using translated materials from other churches and organisations in the area, but due to lack of sound Biblical doctrines, they opted to carry out own translations. The hesitation to use other denominations' materials was born out of the great desire to have the mission members to adhere to reformed teachings and way of life (Van Zyl, 2001:79). Rev. Eybers and his wife spent a lot of time translating all the materials needed, in the training and teaching of the new church, into Kiswahili language, which they took a lot of time to learn. The result was the translation of the catechism. This catechism was used for teaching in the Sunday schools and catechism classes as new members were being prepared for baptism, and those from other denominations who were willing to join the Bwana Loubser Mission were subjected to teaching of the catechism.

It is instructive that the relationship of the Bwana Loubser Mission and that of the government in the area of education was clearly defined by guidelines that were developed and put in place. The task of the Bwana Loubser Mission was to appoint teachers to teach Christian Religious Instruction in schools sponsored by the Bwana Loubser Mission. These teachers were members of the DRC Mission or at least approved by the mission before being allowed to teach. It was a requirement that, even when a teacher came from another organisation, they have a similar doctrinal background and be willing to become a member of the Bwana Loubser Mission. When the teacher was dismissed by the Bwana Loubser Mission, the government could not employ the same teacher without consultation with the Bwana Loubser Mission. In all sponsored schools, the Bwana Loubser Mission developed the religious instruction syllabuses. There was criticism about the low standard of education that was offered by the mission schools. This arose from the fact that some



of the teachers were not qualified and the facilities provided were inadequate. Van Zyl (2001:80) alludes to this when he says, “the high standard of education provided by the government-registered schools resulted in many parents withdrawing students from mission schools” (Van Zyl, 2001:80). The intention of mission education was that the labourers would be of service of the farmers (Bisem, 1983:14).

#### **4.2.5. Church governance system of the Bwana Loubser Mission**

With regard to the church governance system, the model followed by Rev. Eybers at the Bwana Loubser Mission, deviate from the Reformed/Presbyterian synodical church governance system. An Episcopal form of church governance was followed. The leadership of the mission station was in the hands of the missionary, Rev. Eybers, his wife and the local mission committee of the Vergenoeg Congregation. There is very little evidence that the indigenous members of the Bwana Loubser Mission were involved in any way in the management of the mission. This was not in line with the *Mission Policy of the DRC 1935* which states that the indigenous churches founded by the DRC should be guide towards autonomy and independence (Gilhuis, 1982:302).

However, nothing was done to constitute the mission station according to reformed church polity principles. The approach taken by Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers seems to be a contradiction of the *Mission Policy of the DRC 1935*, which was (Gilhuis, 1982:302). There is very little evidence that a leadership structure, based on Reformed church judicial principles regarding the offices, was put in place in the early years of the work. This is in spite of the fact that the baptism was administered to the first African Christians already in 1947. On 27 March 1960 rev Eybers preached his last sermon and received his demission. On 30 March 1960, Rev. and Mrs. Eybers said their farewells to the Mission at Plateau. They had served there for sixteen years (Vergenoeg LMC 16/03/60). The result was that the work was officially transferred from the Bwana Loubser Mission to the Reformed Mission League in 1961

In 1959, a form of church government was instituted, when the three congregations were constituted. This was a very late development. The Bwana Loubser Mission did not acquaint the indigenous ministers of the Word and church councils to Reformed church polity principles of church governance. Rather an adapted form of Reformed church governance was implemented.

When the DRC transferred Bwana Loubser Mission to the Reformed Mission League the later encountered a huge challenge to guide the mission station to become an autonomous indigenous Reformed church in Kenya.

#### **4.3. The Reformed Mission League (1963-1980)**

The Reformed Mission League was founded at Utrecht on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1901, as the Gereformeerde Zendingsbond (GZB) also known as the Reformed Mission League (RML). The latter is a mission organisation, which carry out the missionary activity within the Netherlands Reformed Church. The Reformed Mission League was formed after the schism of 1886, when the Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zendingsvereniging was absorbed into the Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken in 1892. It became necessary to form a new missionary organisation for the members of the Netherlands Reformed Church who adhered to the Reformed confessions (Blei, 2006:81-83). The point of departure of the Reformed Mission League was the three formulae of the reformed confessions, namely the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19) (See addendum 2). The Reformed Mission League recognises that mission work is the task of the church. One of the goals of the Reformed Mission League was to preach the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world.

The Reformed Mission League (RML) saw its ministry as based on the fundamental principle that the scripture, as it is in the Old Testament and the New Testament constitutes the infallible Word of God and as interpreted by the Reformed symbols of faith, namely the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19). The mission statement of the Reformed Mission League explains this thought further:

In response to the Great Commission of Christ (Matt. 28:19), the Lord of the church and the King of the World, the GZB (RML) as a Mission organisation in the Netherlands Reformed Church, on behalf of its supporting congregations who are called to spread the gospel, jointly with partner churches in the body of Christ among people of all cultures, has the primary objective: winning people for the Kingdom of God and discipline them for its coming, in order that the Father's house be filled and the time be fulfilled when God will be all in all and the earth be full of the knowledge of God' (*Gereformeerde Zendingsbond Policy*, 1989).

The Reformed Mission League has on a strong confessional basis. The Reformed Mission League is self-understanding as a champion of the reformed faith (Blei, 2006:81-83). The aim of the Reformed Mission League was to fill the gap in mission work as was carried out by other mission agencies in the Netherlands. It continues to work with other partner organisations, both from the Netherlands and abroad, to fulfil this goal. It sees the work of mission as the task of the local congregation and therefore it carries out this task on behalf of and for the local church. To this end, the congregation ordains and supports the missionary, while the Reformed Mission League facilitates the sending of this missionary to the field, mostly abroad. The Policy *Plan* of the Reformed Mission League states clearly that the Reformed Mission League does not want to take the place of the congregations when it comes to doing mission work, for mission work is the responsibility of the congregations (*RML Policy Plan* 2004–2008:9).

The mission statement above is the Reformed Mission League's theological understanding of the Great Commission. The view of the Reformed Mission League is that to be involved in mission work is to take part in the up building of the local church, the church of Jesus Christ, which He himself gathers and provides for by and through the Holy Spirit, and He involves human beings in this task (Van Zyl, 2001:101).

The Reformed Mission League is a mission organisation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, on who on behalf of its supporting congregations are called to spread the gospel:

The GZB expressly desires to be a church-based mission, within the church of Christ of all ages, which has received this commission. The protestant church in the Netherlands is also part of this universal church. In this church, the GZB has its place; this is where the GZB desires to fulfil its commission on behalf of the congregations and serve the congregations by raising awareness and carrying out its missionary task; to preach the gospel in witness and service to the ends of the earth.”(*Reformed Mission League Policy Plan* 2004-2008:11).

The Reformed Mission League works with the local congregations to fulfil this great task. It helps the congregations in the fulfilment of their missionary task. It encourages and stimulates them to carry out the missionary task of the whole church, as God has desired from the very beginning.

In carrying out its missionary task, the Reformed Mission League does not only work with the local congregations in the Netherlands, but also works in partnership with other churches in areas where the gospel of Christ has not been proclaimed or where the help and support of the Reformed Mission League is requested in order that the gospel is preached and spread to the ends of the earth. In such a case, the Reformed Mission League seeks to do so as an equal partner. Therefore, jointly with partner churches

In openness to what other believers have learned of God and his service, the Reformed Mission League desires to work in a relationship of mutuality with those believers in church planting and church building, and try together with all the saints to better grasp the love of God and the greatness of the Kingdom...  
(*Reformed Mission League Policy Plan 2004-2008*:15).

The three forms of unity (the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19) form the confessional basis and nature of the mission work of the Reformed Mission League. On the practical realisation of the missionary work, the Reformed Mission League works in equipping in the various fields for example church planting and expansion. This refers to the forming and calling of new congregations, both in rural and urban areas. Secondly, they also aid in the theological training and equipping. Great value is placed for the spiritual growth of the church. This training is more geared to theological learning to equip the church to take care of its own leadership needs. Finally, their mission work is expressed in diaconal related work. This includes medical work; relief and other non-theological training that eventually lead to the deepening of the faith of the partner churches and organisations.

The Reformed Mission League was looking for a new mission field in Africa. As the socio-political conditions in Indonesia forced a curtailment of mission work by the Reformed Mission League the latter was looking for a new task on the African Continent (Du Toit, 1998:144). Around 1960 and 1961 the League planned to start work in South Africa in the Natal area. This never took

place. The Reformed Mission League was sensitive to the political situation in South Africa, which was at the time steepened in the challenge of Apartheid. With Natal being out of reach for the Reformed Mission League, the attention was turned to Kenya. The representatives of the Reformed Mission League met with DRC Mission secretary in Transvaal. The Vergenoeg Mission Committee together with the Transvaal synod decided to hand over the Bwana Loubser Mission an acceptable and credible organisation or church. These efforts resulted in the negotiation and eventual handover to the Reformed Mission League in 1961 (Van Zyl, 2001:125-130).

The decision to transfer the Bwana Loubser Mission work to the Reformed Mission League was reached by the council of the Vergenoeg on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1960. It was approved by all three congregations, namely Meru, Vergenoeg and Loubser. The decision was taken with the understanding that the overall responsibility of managing, running and developing the mission from then on would be entirely the work of the Reformed Mission League. The property owned by the Mission was also to be transferred to the League free of charge, if the latter paid for the transfer costs (Vergenoeg LMC07/12/60). It is interesting to note that what was handed over was limited to the work of the Bwana Loubser Mission and not the White Dutch Reformed Congregations of Vergenoeg, Meru and Loubser. These remained under the leadership of the South African missionaries, entirely dedicated to the service of the South African farmers. In July 1961, the Reformed Mission League took over the mission work of the Vergenoeg and Meru presbytery (Du Toit, 1998:144).

In the latter years, when Vergenoeg Congregation closed down their properties were not handed over to the Reformed Mission League but to other churches. The Reformed Mission League took full charge of the mission work from 1<sup>st</sup> November 1961. This was signalled by the arrival of the first missionary from the Netherlands by the name of Miss Stuurman, a nurse, on October 1960; followed a month later by Rev. J. J. Tigchelaar. The mission congregations that were taken over by Reformed Mission League from the Dutch Reformed Church (Bwana Loubser Mission) were the Bwana Loubser Mission Station, present day Plateau Mission Station, Eldoret West congregation, present day Emmanuel Parish, and Kitale congregation, present day Kitale Town Church in Kitale South Parish. The Reformed Mission League guide the young church towards autonomy and self-reliance.

The work of the mission expanded rapidly and within a decade it had reached Kitale, Bungoma, Pokot, Turkana, Kerio Valley and Suna Mogori (Van Zyl, 2001:150-154). The work of the Reformed Mission League followed a comprehensive approach, which underlined their mission policy. The approach was three-fold: evangelisation, charitable projects and development projects (Du Toit, 1998:144). This approach took both the proclamation and the works of service into account. The Reformed Mission League was committed to initiate and emphasize programmes that would result in the well-being of the poor and at the same time provide an environment where the gospel is preached. Unlike the earlier outreach of the DRC, which concentrated on the witnessing through the preaching of the gospel, the Reformed Mission League went further to look into social programmes aimed at promoting the well-being of the people in the deepest sense of the word.

The Reformed Mission League mission policy of 1989 was aimed at alleviating poverty amongst the people while at the same time building their capacity to become self-reliant. Though it took the Reformed Mission League many years to come up with a comprehensive policy that would be shared from the beginning of their mission engagement, it is evident from their initial work that theirs was a broad all-inclusive mission approach. This approach informed the choice of programmes that the Reformed Mission League undertook together with the local communities through the church in the years that followed their work with RCEA. Whether it was a programme in the rural area or one in the urban centre, it was to be guided by the principle that it must not exceed the estimation and the capacity of the church to carry on later without the help of the Reformed Mission League. The introduction and the carrying out of these related activities were meant to facilitate and further the cause of the gospel by the church. To this end, the Reformed Mission League established and supported programmes that were in line with its mission policy. These programmes formed the bulk of the Reformed Mission League work in Kenya at all times. The main goal was to preach the gospel, but around this goal was built a composite of other activities that would expedite their work. These programmes included, but were not limited to, education in both secondary and primary schools. They also had a medical programme that was based on preventive motif, but they also had curative services spread across the breadth of RCEA.

The other programmes were directly aimed at the congregation, such as the women league and youth programmes.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Officially, the Reformed Church of East Africa came into existence in 1963. During July 1963, a synod was constituted and a constitution was adopted. The Presbyterian system of church government was formally embraced by the RCEA with the adoption of the constitution based on the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). The missionaries unofficially remained the supreme governing body of the church. The RCEA considers and understands itself as a reformed church. This is manifested in its historical links with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) and the Reformed Mission League in the Netherlands (RML) as well as the reformed traditions as exhibited in its subscription to historical ecumenical confessions and the reformed confessions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CHURCH JUDICIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RCEA

#### 5.1. Introduction

Currently the RCEA has at least 270 congregations, consists of 110 000 adherents, in western and northern Kenya, with new congregations being planted in Nairobi and the coastal provinces. These 270 congregations are grouped into 40 parishes, which are further grouped into four presbyteries. These Presbyteries form the RCEA Synod (*RCEA Report 2004:7*). The first constitution of the RCEA was based on the structure of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa* (PCEA). The Presbyterian church governance therefore influenced majorly the church judicial development of the RCEA.

This chapter attends to church judicial provisions in the *Constitution of the RCEA* namely the offices, the church assemblies, church discipline, the relationship between the church and the state and lastly the relationship between RCEA and the ecumenical world. Three phases of the church judicial developments of the RCEA can be discern, namely

- a) Dependency to “mother church” 1904-1963,
- b) RCEA as semi-autonomous church under the Reformed Mission League 1963-1991,
- c) RCEA repositions towards self-governance 1982-1992.

#### 5.2. Dependency to the “mother church” (1904-1963)

The Dutch Reformed Church entered the scene of Christian missionary endeavours in Kenya at a very late stage in comparison with other mission organization and/or churches (see Chapter 3). While most of the other churches started, off as direct mission enterprises to the indigenous people, the Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya set of as a church for the white farmers. The white farmers involved in mission work used the material supplied by the African Inland Mission (AIM) namely gospels and hymnbooks in Elgeyo language. The converts of these mission endeavours presented themselves to the AIM for catechism and baptism (Du Toit, 1998:142). Services conducted for the labourers on the farms in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia Districts of the Rift Valley Province were held on an ad hoc basis.



The Vergenoeg Congregation (Eldoret) called Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers as the first missionary to the black labourers on the farms of the white South African farmers in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia Districts of the Rift Valley Province. The Dutch Reformed Church Transvaal Synod put the new congregations in East Africa under the jurisdiction of the Synod of Reformed Church of Zambia (Verstraelen-Gilhuis, 1982:291).

In 1959, the consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church at Eldoret (also known as the congregation of Vergenoeg), together with the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission, used an adapted form of reformed church governance in order to transform the mission stations of Eldoret, Plateau and Kitale North into the congregations of Eldoret, Plateau and Trans Nzoia. Elders were ordained and consistories were formed. The three congregations constituted a Presbytery (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1963:2). According to Berkhof Reformed Church government is characterized by a system of ecclesiastical assemblies namely the consistory (session), the classis (presbytery), the synod(s), and (in some cases) the general assembly (1949:408). The formation of a presbytery is the first evidence of reformed church governance structured implemented by Rev. Eybers. Earlier in 1956 the first three African ministers of the Word was ordained, namely Rev. Hubert Tibanga, Rev. Jeremiah Lugumira and Rev. Jason Wamukota (c.f. Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 94-95; Van Zyl, 2000:83). They took over the leadership of the newly constituted congregations. The missionaries thought that the young church would not be mature enough to manage its own affairs (Verstraelen–Gilhuis 1982:244).

The missionaries' paternalistic attitudes inhibited the growth of the church. The decision-making power of the newly constituted church was in the hands of the missionaries. In the case of Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station, the decision making power resided in the hands of Rev. Loubser and the mission committee of Vergenoeg (Eldoret). The DRC Transvaal Synod, the so-called mother church, has the power to approve decisions regarding policy matters and the mission work in Kenya. The Transvaal Synod had veto power in ecclesiastical and theological matters of the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station. Even when the Transvaal Synod had no objection, it usually took long for decisions or information to be relayed to the Vergenoeg Congregation.

In 1961, the DRC transferred the mission work in Kenya to the Reformed Mission League (RML). Henceforward, the Reformed Mission League sent missionaries to work in Kenya. There was not enough transitional time to hand over Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station and Vergenoeg to the local members of the church (see Chapter 4). The takeover of the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station and Vergenoeg was done in a hastily manner (c.f. Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 94-95; Van Zyl, 2001:161). No preparations had been made for such an eventuality, neither by the Dutch Reformed Church via its mission organisation that was represented by the Vergenoeg Congregation nor by the Reformed Mission League. The name 'Reformed Church of East Africa' was used for the first time in July 1963. Nthamburi rightly observes that the process of Kenyanizing of the Reformed Church of East Africa was rather slow (1991:34). The newly constituted RCEA consisted of three small congregations with a few elders and three ministers of the Word, two of whom were from Tanzania (Van Zyl, 2000:83). The Reformed Church in East Africa was legally obliged to register as an independent African church in order to transfer the property under the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission station to the newly constituted church. The choice of the name 'Reformed Church in East Africa' was an indicative of the desire of the young church to embrace their reformed heritage on the one hand, but on the other hand to become a self-sustainable church. The name 'Independent Reformed Church' was proposed, but it was turned down in order to draw a clear distinction from the numerous 'Independent Churches' mushrooming across the country. The Reformed Church of East Africa was formally inaugurated as an independent church in July 1963. At the Synod 1963, the Reformed Church of East Africa adopted a new constitution, which was structured on the *Constitution of the PCEA*. In September 1963, the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission and the Presbytery merged in a union.

### **5.3. RCEA as semi-autonomous church (1963-1991)**

The beginning of the Reformed Church of East Africa virtually coincides with the birth of the independency of Kenya in June 1963. The RCEA had to meet the entire legal requirement set out in the *Act of Societies of the Republic of Kenya* to be registered as a denomination. For a church to be considered as a legal entity in Kenya it had to meet certain legal requirements. Amongst other, it was required from all association to have a 'Constitution'. This means that all the churches mentioned above, including the RCEA, have to meet the standards of the *Act of Societies of the Republic of Kenya*. 'Society' includes any club, company, partnership or other association

of ten or more persons, whatever its nature or object, established in Kenya or having its headquarters or chief place of business in Kenya, and any branch of a society. Section 19 of *The Societies Act 1968 No.4 of 1968* states the following matters to be provided for in the constitution or rules of every society:

1. The name of the society.
2. The whole of the objects for which the society is to be established.
3. The persons to whom membership is open.
4. The rates of entrance and subscription fees (if any) for membership.
5. The method of suspension or expulsion of members.
6. The titles of officers, trustees and auditors and their terms of office, and the method of their election, appointment, dismissal and suspension.
7. The composition of committees (if any) of the society, the terms of office of members of such committees and the method of their election, appointment, dismissal and suspension.
8. The authority for and the method of filling vacancies on committees.
9. The frequency of, quorums for and dates of the general meetings referred to in section 29 of this Act.
10. The custody and investment of the funds and property of the society, and the designation of the persons responsible therefor.
11. The purposes for which the funds may be used, and in particular the prohibition of the distribution of funds among members.
12. The inspection of the books and list of members of a society, by any member or officer, under section 28(1) of this Act.
13. The annual or periodical audit of accounts.
14. . The formation of branches, if branches may be formed.
15. The manner of amending the name, constitution or rules of the society.
16. . The manner of the dissolution of the society and the disposal of its property on dissolution (Section 19 *The Societies Act 1968 No.4 of 1968*).

The government of Kenya requires all organizations, including churches, to be registered by law. Those churches that do not meet the requirements set by the Kenya government are not recognized and hence are considered cults or sects. The matters of internal organization of the church are a

prerogative of the church herself. As Kenya was emerging from colonial rule to new status, there were fears that the new state might interfere with the running of churches. The church put a boundary on the extent of its relationship with the state.

To gain legal recognition was imperative for the Reformed Mission League. Property owned by the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission needed to be too transferred to the newly constituted church. A constitution was also needed in order to govern the newly constituted church appropriately. A constitution would also help the new denomination to gain national recognition to operate legally in the country.

At the Synod 1963, the Reformed Church of East Africa adopted a new constitution, which was structured based on the *Constitution of the PCEA*. Only slight changes were inserted in the *Constitution of the RCEA*. In principal these two constitutions is similar. The outline of the *Constitution of the RCEA* as adopted on November 1963 is as follows:

- Chapter 1: The name, membership and jurisdiction of this church,
- Chapter 2: Articles declaratory of the fundamental principles of this church,
- Chapter 3: The special relationship of the RCEA and the Reformed Mission League,
- Chapter 4: The government of this church,
- Chapter 5: The offices of this church,
- Chapter 6: The congregations,
- Chapter 7: Church discipline,
- Chapter 8: The property of the church,
- Chapter 9: Practice and procedure in matters herein determined,
- Chapter 10: Rules governing the alteration of this constitution,
- Chapter 11: Provision for inauguration of this constitution,
- Appendix 1: Concordant between the RCEA and Reformed Mission League,
- By-laws,
- By-law about mission work of the Reformed Church of East Africa,
- By-law about the property of this church (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992).

This name 'Reformed Church of East Africa' was proposed by Evangelist Joshua Bibiko and was adopted by the first Synod. According to Van Zyl (2001:161) no minutes were taken at the first Synod of the RCEA (c.f. Benedetto, Guder & Mckim, 1999: 94-95; 2001:161). With the adoption of the *Constitution*, the Presbyterian system of church government was formally introduced in the RCEA.

### 5.3.1 Conference of missionaries in the field

The Conference of missionaries in the field was established in 1963 shortly after the constituting of the RCEA. The Conference consisted of missionaries of Reformed Mission League working in Kenya. In the *Constitution of the RCEA*, provision was made for the existence of the *Conference*. The purpose of the Conference was to enable the missionaries to fellowship, to share ideas and to draft plans for their mission work. The Conference was autonomous from the RCEA and arranged its own activities. The Conference was in charge of the administration of all funds and properties placed at their disposal by the Reformed Mission League (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1963:12). A higher kind of power was vested in the Conference than in the consistory or presbytery. The authority of the Conference was greater in degree and wider in extent than that of the consistory, presbytery and even the Synod of the RCEA. With regard to Reformed church polity this was an anomaly (see Chapter 3). One of the Reformed church principles is that Reformed churches know of no higher kind of ecclesiastical power than that which resides in the consistory (Berkhof, 1949:410).

In practice, the Conference became the body that made and implemented the policies of the RCEA. The Synod of the RCEA was effectively reduced to a position of acting as a rubber stamp to the decisions already taken by the Conference of missionaries in the field. Although the *Constitution of the RCEA* provided that the missionaries would be advisers to the Synod of the RCEA, they actually managed everything. The financial matters remained in the hands of the Conference for more than three decades.

The decisions of the Conference carried a great weight and could never be set aside by the Synod of the RCEA. Van Zyl (2000:162) rightly states that nothing of significance happened from 1961 to 1972 on the issue of autonomy of the RCEA except the adoption of name of the church and the

constitution. In the *Constitution of the RCEA 1963* the special relationship between the RCEA and Reformed Mission League is being highlighted as follows: “This church has a special relationship with the Reformed Mission League the immediate relationship of this church and the Reformed Mission League will be governed by the *Concordant between the Reformed Church of East Africa and Reformed Mission League*. The *Concordant*, which is placed as an appendix to the *Constitution of the Reformed Church of East Africa*, makes provision for the Conference of missionaries in the field to manage the funds and the properties of the Reformed Mission League utilized by the RCEA.

Although the *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision that the missionaries could be invited as advisors to the Synod, they were the *de facto* decision makers in the RCEA. The Conference of missionaries in the field was an independent body with executive powers within the RCEA. The Conference of missionaries in the field restricted the realization of an independent self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting church. In many ways, the Conference has more executive power than the RCEA. The Synod of the RCEA established in 1963 was merely a tool in the hands of the missionaries who continued to control the RCEA through the Conference of missionaries in the field. The decisions of the Synod of the RCEA were to be condoned by the Conference of missionaries in the field before such a decision would be implemented

At the Synod of the RCEA 1970, a fierce and quite an acrimonious exchange on the issue took place between the Reformed Mission League delegation and the delegates of the RCEA. Henceforth, the relationship between the Conference of missionaries in the field and the Synod deteriorated. The chairperson of the Synod, Rev. Joshua Biboko stated that the Conference of missionaries in the field has become a wall between the RCEA and the Reformed Mission League. “The RCEA does not know anything about the funds of the church, what’s budget the church has remained in thick cloud of darkness for long.”<sup>15</sup> A resolution was approved at the RCEA Synod 1970 regarding working relations between the RCEA and the Reformed Mission League (*RCEA Synod Report*, 1970:21). Two years later, in 1972, a new arrangement was reached. Henceforward, the Joint Committee replaced the Conference of missionaries in the field.

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<sup>15</sup>Rev. Joshua Bikoko was the first Moderator of the RCEA. He served from 1980 to 1992 when he retired. He served as the chairman of the Joint Committee from 1972 to 1974 when he was removed for questioning the continued control of the missionaries over the affairs of the synod. He is currently serving in the constitution review committee of the RCEA.

### 5.3.2. The Joint Committee

In 1972, a new structure was put in place called the Joint Committee. This committee composed of the missionaries of the Reformed Mission League working in the RCEA and African ministers of the Word of the RCEA. From the very beginning, the committee was disproportionate because more missionaries were members of the Joint Committee than African ministers of the Word were. Twelve members served on the Committee. Seven members were missionaries and five were pastors of the RCEA. On an annually one missionary retired and was replaced by an African pastor.

The chairperson of the Joint Committee was an African minister of the Word, whilst the secretary, treasurer and Executive Officer of the RCEA were missionaries (*RML Annual report 1975:20*). Missionaries headed all departments of the RCEA. The Reformed Mission League remained the main sponsor of programmatic work of the RCEA and all the information regarding funding was held by the missionaries. Even when the Synod RCEA approved programmatic work to be done in the RCEA, if the missionaries did not approve it, it could not be implemented, seeing that the RCEA was externally funded by the Reformed Mission League. The decisions of the Joint Committee were authoritative, except in cases where they are explicitly declared merely advisory. The RML controlled the financial matters of the RCEA.

The chairperson of the RCEA was a part-time position. He only presided the meetings of Committee, whilst the secretary and treasurer had a more full time responsibility. The Synod of the RCEA met annually in order to endorse the decisions made by the Joint Committee. The missionaries continued to be advisors to the Synod (*Reformed Mission League Annual Report 1975-1976:26*).

The Joint Committee did not solved the problems the RCEA faced regarding being an autonomous church. In effect, the Joint Committee became more powerful than the Synod of the RCEA. The powers of the Joint Committee were extensive and unlimited. These powers spanned across the entire ministry of the RCEA. The Joint Committee was in the position to make decisions regarding the training of ministers of the Word and evangelists, church programmes, matters of discipline and the welfare of church workers which ordinary belongs to a synod of a Reformed church.

According to the *Constitution of the RCEA*, the Synod of the RCEA was the policy making body and final court of appeal. The regulations regarding the Joint Committee demonstrated the opposite to be true (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1963). Through the Joint Committee, the missionaries continued their influence on the administrative and even church judicial governance of the RCEA. The change of leadership from the Conference of missionaries in the field to the Joint Committee did not satisfy the members of the RCEA. Primarily the RCEA was still being administered by an independent decision making structure.

As late as 1976, the Reformed Mission League expressed its fears that the Reformed Church of East Africa was not ready to take leadership responsibilities. This was more than a decade from the time when the RCEA became an autonomous church (*Annual Report of the Reformed Mission League* 1976:26). The only difference between the Joint Committee and the Conference of Missionaries in the Field was that five members of the Joint Committee were members of the RCEA. The members of the *Reformed Mission League* who served on the Joint Committee were still in the majority.

### **5.3.3. The Church Committee**

In the mid-1976, a new layer of administration was added, namely the Church Committee. The latter committee consisted of five RCEA ministers of the Word and two missionaries. For the first time the Africans were in the majority in a policymaking committee of the RCEA. The Committee was responsible for the welfare of all evangelists and ministers of the Word in all matters including posting and transfers of evangelists and ministers of the Word and their ordination. It also dealt with matters of discipline of the evangelists and ministers of the Word. It had also the responsibility to oversee the work of elders and deacons. Ordinarily in Reformed churches the session (church council) is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church and to censure, those found delinquent (see Chapter 3). The Church Committee was responsible for the oversight and discipline of the RCEA. Issues concerning ecumenical relations and theological training and creation of a new church order were also part of the task of the Church Committee (*RCEA Synod Report* 1976:18).



However, the Joint Committee restricted the Church Committee in the carrying out its mandate. The right to endorse every decision of the Church Committee resided in the Joint Committee. According to Rev. Joshua Biboko, the chairperson of the Church Committee, the move from the Conference of Missionaries in the Field to the Joint Committee was “like jumping from the frying pan to the fire” (*RCEA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report 1983:17*). Although the Church Committee was to oversee the daily functioning of the RCEA the drafting of a church order was never completed. No attempt was being made to enable the RCEA to grow into an autonomous church. According to Van Zyl, the Reformed Mission League was hesitant to allow the RCEA to take over the leadership of the church (2000:162). Seemingly, the Reformed Mission League was more interested in diaconal and development work than developing the church judicial structures of the RCEA.

#### **5.3.4. The Executive Committee**

In November 1979, the Synod of the RCEA adopted a new government structure. In the place of the Joint Committee a new committee elected by the Synod was installed, namely the RCEA Executive Committee, which consisted entirely of members of the RCEA. The Executive was accountable to the Synod and was responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Synod. In doing so, the RCEA Synod 1979 took a major step to the self-governance of the RCEA. A new position was created, namely the general secretary.

Both the position of the moderator and the general secretary were electives. The general secretary functions as the secretary of the Executive Committee. This idea to appoint a general secretary has been borrowed from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. From 1963 to 1979 a missionary occupied this position in the RCEA (*Reformed Mission League Annual Report 1978-1979:34*). He was referred to as the Executive officer of the Synod. The latter was in charge of the day-to-day running of the church. It became a powerful position in the RCEA although no provision for the position was made for in the *Constitution of the RCEA*. This position was created in order to manage the donor funding money from the Reformed Mission League. From 1979, African ministers of the Word occupied this position. Arising from the power wielded by the Executive officer of the Synod the position of the general secretary gives the occupant a lot of leeway in terms of the day-to-day decision-making.

Already in 1983 Rev. Lam, a missionary of the Reformed Mission League, stated that it was the responsibility of the RCEA as an autonomous church to develop the form of church governance of RCEA (*RCEA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report* 1983:6). From 1980, the Executive Committee took over all the responsibilities earlier executed by the Joint Committee (*Reformed Mission League Annual Report* 1980-1981:30).

Until 1993, a missionary occupied the position of the general treasurer. The RCEA had no power to appoint the general treasurer. In this way, the Reformed Mission League continued its control of the financial and other resources of the RCEA (*RCEA Synod Resolutions* 1983:27). Since 1979, the Executive Committee of the RCEA took over all the decision-making structures of the RCEA (*Reformed Mission League Annual report* 1980-1981:31-32). The problem regarding the power resided with the Conference of Missionaries of the Field was only partially resolved when the Executive Committee installed in 1979.

A significant attempt took place in 1999 when a proposal was tabled at the Synod of the RCEA to introduce the position of an administrative secretary who should be accountable to the moderator (*STEM Report* 1999:19). The administrative secretary would have no voting powers. The administrative secretary was to be hired through a competitive hiring process and would become an employee of the Synod. However, this proposal was not approved (*CORAT Africa Report* 1996:6; *STEM Report* 1999:19). The intention of this proposal was to avoid a situation where an individual would hold a permanent legislative position in the RCEA. The moderator was a part-time position whilst the general secretary was a full-time position (*RCEA Synod Resolutions* 1979:16).

#### **5.4. The RCEA towards self-governance (1982-1992)**

For the management of the RCEA the Synod 1982 installed an Executive Committee as well as the office of the Executive General Secretary. The process of handing over the church to the indigenous members was a long-drawn-out process. In 1982, the synod of the Reformed Church of East Africa of 1982, declared that the Constitution of the RCEA should be revised. The process of review of the *Constitution of the RCEA* started on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1984. It and was completed

in August 1992. The synod of the RCEA of 1992 approved, after having considered several drafts earlier, the final draft of the *Constitution (Constitution of the RCEA 1992 See addendum 5)*. The *Constitution of the RCEA* was published in 1992.

In the preamble of the Constitution a historical background is being given. The preamble states that the consistory was mindful of the needs of the African labourers on the farms of the members of the consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Constitution of the RCEA 1992:1*). Two layers of decision-making were included in the governance in the RCEA in 1991 namely the Parish Council and the Presbytery Council (*Constitution of the RCEA 1992*). These courts have much broader power than the local church council does. The *Constitution of the RCEA* also introduced new church judicial concepts for example the chair of the Synod was replaced with the moderator, the consistory was replaced with Church Council and the local church was replaced with parish (*Constitution of the RCEA 1992*).

The *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* also introduced a new layer of executive power in the RCEA namely the office-bearers. The latter was a group of five members elected by the Synod, namely the moderator, the deputy moderator, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary and the honorary treasurer. The first four were ministers of the Word while the honorary treasurer was an elder. They were part of the Executive Committee (*Reformed Mission League Annual Report 1990:35*). In order to correct the earlier situation, where the general secretary has episcopal powers, the 1992 Synod approved a proposal that the position of the moderator will henceforward will be a full-time position (*RCEA Synod Report 1992:24*). Article 13 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that the Moderator, the General Secretary and the ministers of the Word shall be employees of the Synod. Secretaries of the Departments and Programmes (Departmental Heads) shall be employees of the Executive Committee. All other staff shall be employees of the Departmental Committee under which the Member of staff shall be employed (Article 13 *Constitution RCEA 1992*). The power struggle between the moderator and the general secretary was exposed specifically at the RCEA Synod of 1996. The Synod accordingly decided to remove both the moderator, Rev. Hosea Chemweno and the general secretary, Rev. Geoffrey Songok from office (*RCEA Synod Resolution 1996:12*). According to Berkhof (1949:405) it is one of the fundamental principles of Reformed or Presbyterian government, that the power or authority does

not reside in the major assemblies or like in the case of the RCEA in the hands of a few individuals. The RCEA Synod of 2000 therefore resolved to review the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* in order to address the following challenges in the RCEA:

- a) The question of Baptism,
- b) The ordination of women,
- c) The relationship of RCEA and other churches,
- d) The relationship between RCEA and the state.

The Synod also approved a committee of seven members in order to attend to the decisions of the Synod. The committee was expected to table a report at the Synod of 2001 (*RCEA Synod Resolution*, 2000:21). To date this decision was not executed.

## **5.5. Church Judicial Analysis of the Constitution of the RCEA 1992**

### **5.5.1. The name, membership and jurisdiction of this church**

The *Constitution of the RCEA*, as adopted in the Synod of July 1967, states the undertaking of uniting the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission and the Eldoret Congregation (known as Vergenoeg) (which was constituted in 1959) into the Reformed Church of East Africa (Article 1 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1967). In Article I of the *Constitution of the RCEA*, the name of the church is given as the Reformed Church of East Africa. The name is indicative of two things. First, it is indicative of the jurisdiction of the church. The region of East Africa is being seen as the mission field of the RCEA. There have been various attempts to plant churches in Uganda, Tanzania and lately Southern Sudan. These efforts have not born much fruit except in Southern Sudan, though the work there has little to do with RCEA. The role of RCEA has primarily been to train ministers of the Word and send them to Southern Sudan (*RCEA Synod Report*, 2006:21). The naming and the jurisdiction of the RCEA were not in any way about the vision to expand the church into East Africa. It was rather due to the talks in the political domain during the early 1960s about the united East African community. The name, RCEA, is therefore more or less a consequence of the time. Even the Presbyterian Church of East Africa refers in their name to the East Africa region.

The second issue that comes out in this article is the name of the church (Article 1 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). With the choice of the name ‘Reformed Church’, it is indicative of the historical roots and the type of polity that it desired to have. ‘Reformed’ refers to a family of churches arising

from the reformation and following the teachings of John Calvin. The name was also a way of keeping the identity with their historical linkage with the Dutch Reformed Church.

Article 1 indicates that the RCEA consists of all the Reformed Congregations under the jurisdiction of the Synod of the Reformed Church of East Africa, together with all congregations which may hereafter be founded through the work of the Reformed Church of East Africa and join its fellowship in accordance with the *Constitution* (Article 1 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). Church planting and the constituting of new congregations is being seen as one of the responsibilities of the RCEA. Article 1 also indicates that the RCEA is part of the universal and Holy Catholic Apostolic church (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). The word 'catholic' means universal, and so describes the notion that the Church of Christ may be found anywhere on earth throughout the course of the earth's existence (Bouwman 2000:21).

The RCEA understands itself as part of the worldwide church and affirms in article 2.2 of the *Constitution* the historic confessions of the faith known as the Apostle's Creed and the Athanasius Creed as containing the sum and the substance of faith of the church (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). The church also adopts as a subordinate and provisional standard of faith the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) and the *katekisasi*. The *katekisasi* refers to a translated version of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The *Katekisasi* is being used in the RCEA particularly in preparing new Christians for baptism and for those preparing for confirmation. It was also earlier being used in the instruction of children in the RCEA founded schools. This is no longer the case since the government of Kenya has set standard syllabus that is being used by all public and church founded schools. The *Belgic Confession* (1561) and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19) are omitted in the standards of the RCEA. Ironically, the Reformed Mission League, which took over from the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission, has a strong reformed background and confessional base (*Gereformeerde Zending Bond Policy Plan*, 2004–2008:5). One would have therefore expected that the Reformed Mission League would have guided the RCEA to formulate a Reformed church order based on the Church Order of *Dordt* and the three forms of unity namely *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19) as the church's confessional base.

### 5.2.2. Declaratory articles of the Constitution of the RCEA 1992

The second Article in the *Constitution of the RCEA* is being considered as a fundamental basis of the RCEA. It consists of the following clauses:

- 2.1. The Reformed Church of East Africa is part of the holy catholic or universal apostolic Church.
- 2.2. The Reformed Church of East Africa receives the Scripture of the Old and New Testament as the infallible word of God and as its supreme rule of faith and life.
- 2.3. The Church receives the historic confession, of the faith known as the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasius Creed, as containing the sum and the substance of the faith of the church.
- 2.4. The Church adopts as a subordinate and provisional standard its catechism known as the *Katekisma* until the church shall exercise its right to frame its own confession of faith.
- 2.5. This church as part of the universal church, wherein the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed a government in the hands of the church office-bearers, receives from Him, its divine King and heir, and from Him alone, the right and power, subject to no civil authority, to adjudicate finally in all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline of this church, including the right to determine all questions concerning membership and office in the church, the constitution and membership of its courts and the mode of election of its office-bearers.
- 2.6. The Church has the inherent right under the safeguards of deliberate action and legislation provided by the church itself to frame or adopt its subordinate standards to define the sense in which it understands these standards, to modify the statements, and to define the relation thereto of its office and fundamental doctrines of Christian faith with word of God and fundamental doctrines of Christian faith as set forth in the standards of which agreement the church shall first judge with the due regard to liberty of opinion.
- 2.7. The church, believing it to be the will of Christ that His disciples shall be all one in the Father and in Him, that the world may believe that the father has sent him, recognizes the obligation to seek and promote union with other churches in which it finds the word of God to be purely preached, the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance and discipline rightly exercised; and it has the right to unite with any such church without loss of its identity on terms which this church finds to be consistent with these Articles.
- 2.8. The church, in the discharge of its mission in the world, cannot confine solely to the preaching of the word and administration of purely religious ordinances. Believing that it is entrusted with a ministry not only to the souls of men, but also to their bodies and minds, and following the example of its Masters who went about doing good, it claims the right, as it shall see fit, to benefit of all who desire its help, and other agencies in promoting the mental, physical and moral welfare of the whole community.

- 2.9. The church believes that God is the Creator of all men that Christ died for all without distinction of race, tribe and colour and that who believe in him, are one in Him, recognizes its obligation to preach the Gospel to man and woman of all races, tribes and colours, and affirms its resolve to recognize no barrier of race, tribe and colour within its fellowship and service.
- 2.10. The church has the right to interpret these Articles, and subject to the safeguards for the action and legislation provided by the church itself, to modify or add legislation provided by the church itself, to modify or add to them, but always consistently with the provisions of Article 22 hereof, adherence to which, as interpreted by the church, is essential to its continuity and corporate life.
- 2.11. The church has the right to co-operate with other organizations to develop and fellowship with other Christian organizations and to become a member of such organizations on terms, which the church finds to be consistent with these Articles (*Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*: Article 2).

The *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* also indicates that alternations in the *Constitution* shall be made after the Parishes and Presbyteries have been consulted and when the synod approved the change, with a two-third majority. Article I and II of the *Constitution of the RCEA* can only be changed on condition that any change or addition thereto can only be made if the Bible supports the change and the full synod unanimously approves the alteration (*Constitution of the RCEA, 1992* Article xvi: Alterations): Article 1 and 2 requires an unanimous approval from the Synod of the RCEA in order to be amended.

In Article 2.1 the RCEA declares its universality as a church namely the Reformed Church of East Africa sees herself as being part of the universal apostolic Church. This is an indication that as a church the RCEA exists alongside other churches and participates with them in the mission of God, the *missio dei*, for a church cannot exist for its own sake (*Constitution of the RCEA, 1992* Article 2.1).

In Article 2.2 the RCEA declares the Word of God as supreme rule of faith and life (*Constitution of the RCEA, 1992* Article 1). In doing so, the RCEA affirms and maintains the old reformed commitment to scripture as foundation for church order (c.f. Janssen, 2000:11). With this article, the RCEA affirms that the Bible is the final authority in matters of Reformed Church polity (c.f. Brink and De Ridder, 1980:29). This is even more clearly shown in the Belgic Confession, which states that, the confessions as a sign of a true church. “That all things are managed according to



the pure word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus acknowledged as the only head of the church” (*Belgic Confession*, Article 29). The Bible is the Word of God as to both its contents and its form. The Bible is the complete revelation and all that God wanted to reveal of Himself is found in it. In the Word, we get the direction, instruction and the will of God for humankind. God has not hidden anything from His creation and His full disclosure is manifest in the Word (Beets, 1929:42). The RCEA therefore holds the Bible in high regard. The Word hence becomes the standard upon which all else in the church and life of church members depend. In the RCEA’s Worship book, *Taratibu ya Ibada*, the question that underlies the baptism and ordination of elders, deacons and ministers of the Word is whether or not one believes that the Old and the New Testaments are the only and true and revealed Word of God as rule of faith and life.

In Article 2.3 the RCEA affirms the historic confession of the faith known as the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasius Creed, as containing the sum and the substance of the faith of the church. However, the RCEA did not include *Belgic Confession* (1561) and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–1619) in their confessional basis. The ecumenical creeds are important as they indicate the universality of the church and its connection to the universal and worldwide church. The reason for this omission in the confessional basis of the RCEA is not clear. Even when the RCEA revised the *Constitution of 1963* and replaced it with the *Constitution of 1992*, the *Belgic Confession* (1561) and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–1619) were not included in the confessional basis of the RCEA.

Article 2.3 and 2.4 of the *Constitution of 1992* is an adapted version of the *Practice and Procedure Manual* of the PCEA.

This church received the historic Confession of the Faith known as the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed and short Catechism as containing the same substance of faith of the Church. Until such time as this Church shall exercise its right to frame its own Confession of Faith, it adopts as a subordinate standard the statement known as The Short Statement of Faith adopted by the Presbytery of East Africa in the year 1943 ( article 2 *Presbyterian Practice and Procedure Manual* 1998:44)



In Article 2.3 provision is being made for the RCEA to formulate its own standard of faith and confession in future. Thus far, the RCEA did not attend to the formulation of her own confession of faith. The RCEA therefore continues to use the ecumenical creeds and the “*katekisma*.” In Article 2.4 the RCEA adopts as a subordinate and provisional standard the *Katekisma* until the church shall exercise its right to frame its own confession of faith. According to Leith, the finished character of the seventeen-century confessions gave them an appearance and universality (Leith, 1977:129). The *Constitution of the RCEA* states that the RCEA has the “inherent right, free from interference by civil authority, but under the safeguards of deliberate action and legislation provided by the church itself, to frame or adopt its subordinate standards, to define the sense in which it understands these standards, to modify the form of statements, and to define the relation thereto of its office-bearers and members, but always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as set forth in these standards of which agreement the church shall be the sole judge, and with due regard to liberty of opinion in points which do not enter into the substance of the faith” (c.f. Chapter 2 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992).

In Article 2.5 the RCEA affirms the Reformed principle that Jesus Christ has appointed office-bearers to govern the church. The *Constitution of the RCEA*, furthermore affirms that the office-bearers derive their power not from an external body, but receives it from Christ. The power of the RCEA is therefore subjected to no civil authority.

The RCEA affirms that the right to adjudicate finally in all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline of RCEA including the right to determine all questions concerning membership and office in the church, the constitution and membership of its courts and the mode of election of its office-bearers lays in the hands of the courts of the RCEA (Article 2.5). Article 2.6. of the *Constitution* refers to any interference by the government. The RCEA affirms in the article its inherent right under the safeguards of deliberate action and legislation provided by the church itself to frame or adopts its subordinate standards. The article states clearly that the RCEA has a right to make its own legislation in consistent with the Word of God. The RCEA recognizes the authority of the state in all matters concerning the temporal life of society. The RCEA cooperates with the state in matters of education, health and poverty eradication. From their

establishment the RCEA has been careful not to be seen too close or too far from the state (Bauswein and Vischer, 1999:31).

### 5.5.3. The offices of the RCEA

The *Constitution of the RCEA* states that the RCEA “as part of the universal Church received from Jesus Christ, the divine king and head of the Church the right and power to legislate and adjudicate in all matters of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline in the church, including the right to determine all questions concerning, membership and office in the church, the constitution and of its courts, and mode of election of its office – bearers” (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 2.5). The RCEA affirms that Christ's authority is entrusted to the local church. Christ rules in the Church, and does so by means of office-bearers (Bouwman, 2000:15; Coertzen, 2004:107-109). In his *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques 1541* John Calvin states, that there are four orders of office instituted by Christ for the government of his Church.

First, pastors; then doctors; next elders; and fourth deacons. Hence, if we will have a Church well ordered and maintained we ought to observe this form of government. As to the pastors, whom Scripture also sometimes calls elders and ministers of the Word, their office is to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments, and to enjoin brotherly corrections along with the elders and colleagues. Now in order that nothing happen confusedly in the Church, no one is to enter upon this office without a calling. In this, it is necessary to consider three things, namely the principal thing is the examination, then what belongs to the institution of the ministers of the Word; third, what ceremony or method of procedure it is good to observe in introducing them to office.

Article 2 of the *Church order of Dordt* (1619) indicates that there are four kinds of offices: ministers of the Word, doctors (professors), elders, and deacons. The RCEA recognizes the office of the minister of the Word, the office of the evangelist, the office of the elder and the office of the deacon. In addition, it also receives the services of missionaries sent out by the Reformed Mission League. These offices are for the edification and the building of the body of Christ. The services

of the missionaries are not given emphasis in the current constitution<sup>16</sup> (Vorster, 2003:15; Vischer, 1992:44-46). In the *Church Order of Dordt* offices is treated first, even before a treatment of ecclesiastical assemblies. This emphasizes the fact that the government of the church resides fundamentally in the office (Hanko, 1962:12). Christ is the Head and King of His church and that He rules over His church by His Word and Spirit. He is the chief and only Office Bearer (cf. Matt. 28:18; I Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:20-22; etc.).

Article 3.4.1-3.4.4 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates the requirements and the task of these offices (see Addendum 5). Article 5 of the *Constitution* states that the church office-bearers receives the right and power to adjudicate finally in all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline from God alone subject to no civil authority (Article 5 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). The offices in the church are instruments in the hands of Christ through which He institutes, conserves and builds the church (Vorster, 2003:15). Christ uses different people to serve His church in the different ministries He has given to His church. Vorster (2003:15) has identified four reasons the offices are important in the church.

- a) The offices in the church are necessary because Jesus Christ Himself deemed it necessary (Ephesians 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 10:15).
- b) The ministry of the Word and Sacraments and the maintenance of discipline are important for the wellness of the church.
- c) The church in the world is struggling and needs comfort and admonishment.
- d) The church must fulfil its calling in an orderly and fundamental way.

The church officers are instruments in the hands of Christ, through whom He institutes, conserves and builds the church (Vorster, 2003:15). Christ uses these officers to fulfil His own work by means of their ordained services (Berkhof, 1962:193). They work within the limitation and bounds of the Word and the Holy Spirit of God. Through these ministries, the Lord dispenses His gifts to

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<sup>16</sup> The constitution in use in the RCEA was enacted in 1992. Not many changes were introduced in the *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992. However the position of the Reformed Mission League was significantly reduced. The office of the professor of the theology was added in the *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992. This brings the offices recognized by the RCEA to five, namely office of the minister of the Word, the office of the elder, the office of the evangelist, the office of the deacon and the office of the professor of theology.

the church (Battles, 1980:294). The Apostles were the first office-bearers who were called and chosen during the earthly mission of Jesus Christ. (Whitherow, 1967:34).

### **5.5.3.1. The office of the minister of the Word**

The premise of the RCEA is that only male members of the RCEA are eligible to be trained and ordained as ministers of the Word. The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates therefore that in order to be ordained as a minister of the Word the person should meet the following requirements:

- a) A member of the Church, is of good reputation,
- b) Testifies to be called by God to this Ministry,
- c) He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in the church ceremony,
- d) He has followed theological, pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the synod,
- e) He is trustworthy and able to handle finances,
- f) He is accepted by the Synod for ordination to be a minister.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that main tasks of the minister of the Word are:

- a) To preach and teach the word of God,
- b) To administer the sacraments and ceremonies of the church,
- c) To shepherd the congregations,
- d) To admonish the congregations,
- e) To give pastoral care,
- f) To guard the church constitution and doctrines,
- g) To participate in the government of the church.

The minister of the Word in the RCEA presides all the councils. The moderator of the RCEA as well as the general secretary can only be elected from amongst the ordained pastors. According to Hanco (1962:37-38) the following is the duties of a minister of the Word:

- a) To continue in prayer,
- b) To continue in the ministry of the Word, A minister of the Word is called to bring the Word of God, but must also diligently study the Word.
- c) To dispense the sacraments.

The minister of the Word is a teaching elder. This does not mean that a minister of the Word is in a higher or superior office with authority over his fellow office-bearers. The minister of the Word

is rather their equal (Hanko, 1962:37-38). According to Hanko, the lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office consists of election by the consistory, examination of the candidate, approbation by the members of the calling congregation and the ordination in the presence of the congregation:

First, in the election by the consistory and the deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance that only those can for the first time be called to the ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of classis or of the counsellor appointed for this purpose by the classis.

Secondly, in the examination of both doctrine and life, which shall be conducted by the classis to which the call must be submitted for approval and which, shall take place in the presence of three delegates of synod from the nearest classis.

Thirdly, in the approbation by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the minister of the Word having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objection arises; which approbation, however, is not required in case the election takes place with the cooperation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made.

Finally, in the public ordination in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers, and imposition of hands by the officiating minister of the Word (and by other ministers of the Word who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose (Hanko, 1962:37-38).

According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (20014:32) it appears that in the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* the elders had no sitting on the meeting where ministers of the Word were called.

The order is that ministers first elect such as ought to hold office; afterwards that he be presented to the Council; and if he is found worthy the Council receive and accept him, giving him certification to produce finally to the people when he

preaches, in order that he be received by the common consent of the company of the faithful. If he be found unworthy, and show this after due probation, it is necessary to proceed to a new election for the choosing of another (*Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques 1541*).

Calvin however later formally sets forth the importance of the participation of elders in the full governance of the church in Book IV of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ministers of the Word, elders and deacons receive from the Lord equal authority, with none being lord over any other. This concept is captured in Reformed church orders (c.f. Bouwman 49-50). In Reformed Churches, ministers of the Word have to subscribe to the confessional basis of the denomination, for example subscription form for ministers of the Word:

- a) We, ministers of the Word ..., signatories to this Subscription Form, sincerely, solemnly, and with a good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the three Forms of Unity, namely the *Belgic Confession*, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt, are in full agreement with the Word of God.
- b) We promise therefore that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the previously mentioned doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same in our public preaching or writing. We also promise not only to earnestly reject all errors which conflict with the aforesaid doctrine, but that we shall at all times be willing to refute and contradict them, doing our utmost in reproof, combating, and helping to resist such errors.
- c) Should at any time in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds we faithfully promise not to propose, teach, or defend them, neither in our preaching nor in our writing, publicly nor privately, but to first disclose these reservations to the ecclesiastical assemblies in the ecclesiastical way so that they may examine them.
- d) Furthermore, we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies or should we persist in our reservations we agree by that very fact to be suspended from our office.

- e) Moreover, should the consistory, the classis church, or synod at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our office. However, we reserve for ourselves the right of appeal should we believe ourselves aggrieved by the judgement of the consistory or classis church. Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will submit to the determination and judgement of the consistory and/or classis church. (Bouwman, 2000:62).

The *Church Order of Dordt* states clearly that ministers of the Word and likewise the professors of theology are obliged to subscribe to the three formulas of unity, namely, the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dordt*, 1618-19. Furthermore, those who refuse in *de facto* would be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office (Van Oene, 1990:118-124; Hanks, 1962:90-93; Art. 54 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 see Addendum 3). Likewise, the elders and deacons should subscribe to the previously mentioned formulas of unity. Doctrinal unity is expressed in the subscription of the confessions of the church. These confessions are expressions of the faith of the believers that which believers confess as the truth of the Word of God. Reformed Churches ordinarily makes provision for the signing of the *Formula of Subscription* at legitimation or ordination (Hanks, 1962: 91). Various promises are made by the office-bearers who sign the *Formula of Subscription*:

- a) The Form is a declaration of agreement with our Reformed confessions and with the doctrines contained in them. Those who sign express that they believe these confessions contain the truth of the Word of God.
- b) Further, a promise is made actively to teach and to defend these doctrines.
- c) Negatively, the promise is made to reject all heresies opposed to these doctrines of the confessions. Those who sign may not do this either in public preaching or in writing. Nevertheless, they must not simply reject error. They must also militate against error, refuting and contradicting all heresy. They must exert themselves to keep the church free from doctrinal error.
- d) Further, the promise is made to be honest and upright before the churches in all matters of

doctrine. If one has any questions in his mind concerning the doctrines of the confessions, he promises not to propose, teach, or defend these differences. He promises that he will not do this either in public or in private. He promises that he will keep silent both in his preaching and in his writing. On the one hand, it means that any differences with the confessions must be revealed to the consistory, classis, and synod. While this process is being followed, the one making his appeal must keep silent. In addition, when assemblies reach their decisions, he must abide by the judgment of the assemblies. On the other hand, he promises to submit to an official examination concerning his views if at any time assemblies think that there is sufficient ground of suspicion concerning his teaching and preaching. The article (and the Formula) speaks also of the penalty attached to any violation of these promises. This penalty is *de facto* suspension from office. The idea is that an office bearer who breaks his promise suspends himself from office by his failure to abide by his promise. He has the right of appeal in any judgment rendered. However, during his appeal he must submit to the decisions taken and to his own promises. The following must sign all ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons as well as all professors of theology (Hanko, 1962:93; Bouwman, 2000:100).

Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:33) argues that Presbyterianism disagrees with the Episcopalism that all church power is vested in the clergy. Rather, Presbyterianism emphasizes that the congregants have a right to substantive participation in the government of the church. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:33) adds that Presbyterianism refutes that the apostolic office is perpetual. Rather, Presbyterianism emphasises that Christ committed his power in the first instance to the local congregation. The position of privileged priesthood is therefore redundant in a Reformed system of church governance (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:33). This Reformed church polity principle serves according to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:32) to protect congregations and consistories from domineering individuals. It is Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:33) presupposition that Presbyterians find the locus of the church in the local congregation, neither as in a congregational polity, nor in a hierarchy of authoritative individuals, as in episcopal polity. No individual in the Reformed church governance system holds any authority in the church except by the call of the church Plaatjies-Van Huffel states categorically (2014:32).

According to the *Church Order of Dordt*, it is the responsibility of the church council to call a minister of the Word, whilst in the RCEA the responsibility resides with the synod. According to



Shaver, the office of the minister of the Word is to proclaim the gospel and to administer the sacraments. The pastor should also, together with the elders, exercise church discipline, and govern the congregation (Schaver, 1947:43). The minister of the Word is bound to the local congregation, although this does not exclude the possibility of the pastor assisting other congregations when there is a need or upon being requested. Calvin emphasized the need for ministers of the Word to be people of integrity and competence, maintained by careful examination of life, ability in theology and of capacity for the communication of the Christian message (Leith, 1977:145). The minister of the Word plays also a crucial role as an interpreter of the scripture and leads the church in worship and instruction. This role is critical in the spiritual well-being of the church. For this reason, there are very stringent demands upon the minister of the Word (I Timothy 3:1-7). The minister of the Word's position is significant in relation to the other offices in function and but not in status.

#### **5.5.3.2. The office of the elder**

The task of elders to shepherd God's church can be divided into two areas of responsibility, namely teaching and ruling (see I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7; Bouwman, 2000:40). The offices of the pastor and the elder are closely related. The elders are ordinarily referred to as the ruling elders, whilst the minister of the Word is referred to as teaching elders. The *Constitution of the RCEA* provides that the pastor and the elder as well as the evangelists partake in the government of the church (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 article 3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.4.4).

The premise of the RCEA is that only male members of the RCEA are eligible to be called and ordained as elders of the RCEA. The *Constitution of the RCEA* therefore makes provision that a male person shall be ordained as an elder of the RCEA if:

- a) He is a member of the church,
- b) He is of good reputation,
- c) He is a committed Christian,
- d) He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony,
- e) He is conversant with the church traditions and doctrines,
- f) He has leadership qualities and is easier to learn,

- g) He is able to teach and preach,
- h) He is a trustworthy and able to handle finances,
- i) He is elected by the local church to be an elder.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates furthermore that main tasks of the elder are:

- a) To assist the pastor in his work,
- b) To supervise the congregation with fellow elders,
- c) To take care of the pastor's and evangelists welfare,
- d) To facilitate the implementation of parish policies and plans,
- e) To protect the congregation from unbiblical teaching and teachings contrary to the church doctrine,
- f) To participate in the government of the church.

According to Hanks (1962:47) John Calvin should be accredited for restoring the office of elder to its rightful place in the church of Christ. This office had been all but lost in the Roman Catholic Church. The office of elder has especially two different names in Scripture: *presbytero* and *episcopos*". (1962:47). The term *presbytero* is used in Scripture to denote 'old men', and designate a class of officers similar to those who functioned in the synagogue. This term is frequently used interchangeably with the term *episkopoi* as in Acts 20:17 (Schaver, 1947:43; Berkhof, 1962:189).

Contrary to the position of Roman Catholicism, these two names designate the same office. They merely look at this one office from two different points of view (c.f. Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5, 7; I Timothy 3:1; I Peter 5:1, 2.; Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 6, 22). From all these passages, it is evident that this office of elder is a reflection of Christ's kingly office. This office is therefore the ruling office in the church. According to Hanks (1962:47) Christ, the perfect Office-bearer reflects the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. In the church, men and women are endowed with the authority which Christ possesses and which He confers upon them. "As the office of minister of the Word reflects the prophetic office of Christ and as the office of deacon reflects the high priestly office of Christ, so also does the office of elder reflect the ruling office of Christ." (1962:47). The elders, therefore, constitute the ruling body in the church.

According to Beattie (1999:14) the offices of elder and deacon are a high calling. It is a calling of God. It is a perpetual office

Once a person has been ordained the office of elder or deacon is a perpetual office.

It is not dependent on current service on the session or board of deacons. It is not possible to lay aside the responsibilities or the privileges of the office at pleasure.

Nor can an elder or deacon be divested of those responsibilities and privileges except as provided in The Rules of Discipline (c.f. *PCUSA Constitution* 2016 G-6. 0701; Beattie, 2007:14).

Concerning this election of elders, the consistory and the congregation cooperate in this work (Hanko, 1962:47). Regarding the election of elders, Christ Himself calls them to the office. The requirements for such a lawful call are therefore according to Hanko essentially the same as the requirements for the lawful call of ministers of the Word (Hanko, 1962:13). The examination is eliminated. The examination is principally performed by the necessity of choosing men and women who are qualified for this office. These qualifications are listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (Hanko, 1962:47). There are two methods, which can be used for the election of elders. One method is that according to which the consistory presents a nomination of twice the number of elders needed, from which nomination the congregation chooses one-half. The second procedure is one according to which the consistory submits for approbation as many elders as are needed. It is only when this procedure is followed that the congregation must be given the opportunity to suggest suitable persons. The consistory holds in both cases the decisive vote (Hanko, 1962:47).

According to Hanko, the approbation will necessarily be different according to the method of election in use (1962:47). If the consistory submits to the approbation of the congregation as many elders as are needed, then approbation takes place only once. It is done when the congregation approves of the slate of elders. If the congregation itself votes from a nomination, then approbation takes place twice. It takes place when the nomination is submitted to the congregation for approval. In addition, it is done again when the slate of elected elders is submitted for approbation before ordination. Both approbations are important. The first is, according to Hanko (1962:47) necessary

to keep unworthy and unqualified men and women from the office of elders. The second is important to ensure that the men and women to be installed are worthy to be ordained (1962:47).

According Hanko (1962:47) the installation should be taken place with public prayers and a formula. The formula emphasis uniformity of practice in all the churches of the federation and on the other hand, it gives instruction as to the office and admonishes the congregation and the office-bearers concerning their responsibilities (1962:47). Nominations must be announced on two successive Sundays. According Hanko (1962:47) there are two reasons for this. One is to insure that all the members are informed of the nomination. The second is that opportunity may be given to bring objections against the nomination or against the election (1962:47).

In general, the office of elder is that of government or supervision over the congregation. (cf. Van Oene, 1990:13-22; Hanko, 1962:51-52; Art. 50 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). The elders must see to it that they “exercise church discipline...and that everything is done decently and in good order.” This refers to the doctrine and life of all the members of the congregation. This article also lays upon the elders the responsibility for censure and excommunication. Each individual is under the supervision of the consistory in all his walk and life from a spiritual viewpoint. However, the local church council must also supervise the organic life of the congregation in societies, congregational meetings, etcetera (Hanko, 1962:47). The church council must supervision their fellow office-bearers and see to it that all the office-bearers perform their duties faithfully. The elders must see to it that the deacons, both collectively and individually, perform the duties of their office in dispensing the mercies of Christ. According tom Hanko the minister of the Word is not above the consistory in any way (1962:47).

Hanko (1962:47) emphasises the importance of the wellbeing of the church and that the elders should faithfully perform their tasks. According to Hanko (1962:47) the authority of an elder is only in conjunction with the other elders, so that no individual elder can take unilateral action. ‘Every decision must be by the body and the official action of the elders must be by the consistory as a whole’ (Hanko, 1962:47). Hanko furthermore emphasises the importance of house visitation. He see it as an opportunity to bring the Word of God to the individuals in the church of Christ and address that Word of God to the particular needs of each member (Hanko, 1962:47). The purpose

is for the edification of the church, the comfort and instruction of the members and the exhortation of others.

The consistory in a given area was entrusted with the responsibility of the spiritual care of all the people within its boundaries. According to Hanco, it refers to the calling of each consistory to perform the work of the “extension of God’s kingdom, especially the promotion of missions” (Hanco, 1962:47).

### **5.5.3.3 The office of the deacon**

The office of the deacon is the only office in the RCEA that is open to both males and females. All the other offices namely minister of the Word, elder, evangelist and professor of theology are restricted to males (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Article 3.4.3). The opening up of the office of the deacon to females came into being after 1979. In the *Constitution of the RCEA* 1992, provisions were made to include articles regarding the office of the deacon (*RCEA Synod Resolution*, 1992). The functions of the office of the deacon are spelled out as follows:

- a) To assist the pastor in his work,
- b) To deal with the social and spiritual needs of all within the bounds of the local church,
- c) To take care of the properties of the church, together with the elders and
- d) To participate in the governance of the church (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Article 3.4.3).

The *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision that a person shall be ordained as a deacon of the church if:

- a) He or she is a member of the church.
- b) He or she is of good reputation.
- c) He or she is a committed Christian.
- d) He or she is a biological male or female, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- e) He or she is conversant with the church traditions and doctrines.
- f) He or she has leadership qualities and is eager to learn.
- g) He or she is trustworthy and able to handle finances.

- h) He or she is able to teach and preach.
- i) He or she is elected by the local church to be a deacon.

There is very little emphasis in the RCEA on the work of mercy. The deacons are ordinarily being seen in the RCEA as those who are responsible for collecting of the offerings on a Sunday service, do the counting and bank the money. The deacons act like bookkeepers of the RCEA. The deacon is also being considered as an assistant to the pastor. This resulted that the office of the deacon is being seen as subordinate to that of the elder and the minister of the Word, to the extent that many deacons see their position as a preparatory stage to become elders.

According to Brink and De Ridder the work of the deacons (*diakonoi*, those who *serve*), should be that of representing the congregation in the work of Christian mercy. The emphasis should be to represent Jesus Christ, who, while on earth, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk and showed compassion of those that were distressed (Brink and De Ridder, 1980:130). The thrust of their work is to be Christ-like in reaching out to the disadvantaged in the church and society. They are to serve the needy with works of love, gifts of money and other assistance and give counsel and lead those in need to see the grace of the loving Saviour and to recognize the Lord from whom all blessings flow (Janssen, 2000:90). The deacons have the task to raise the sensitivity of the congregations towards the vulnerable, the poor, the distressed and the oppressed in the community according to Vorster (2003:46). The RCEA needs to take the ministry of deacons more seriously than it has done thus far. The Synod of the RCEA needs to redefine the tasks of the deacon from a scriptural and contextual perspective, in view of the critical role that the deacons play in the society in general and the church in particular (c.f. Brink and De Ridder, 1980:131).

The office of the deacons was instituted by the apostles in the early church, but was lost in the Roman Catholic Church. It was reinstated in the churches of the Reformation, which followed John Calvin's teachings (Hanko, 1962: 49-51). Article 24 of the *Church Order of Dordt* deals with election to the office of deacons describes the same procedure for their lawful call as for the elders. It hereby portrays that the office of deacons is equal to the other offices in the church of Christ (cf. Van Oene, 1990:13-22; Hanko, 1962: 49-51; Article 24 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 see

Addendum 3). According to Hanko (1962: 49-51) as far as the nature of the office is concerned the deacons do not constitute a business office or central accounting agency in the church. “Nor are the deacons’ younger men or women in training for the office of elders. The office is not a natural office but a spiritual one. The office is on par with the other offices in the church.” (1962: 49-51). It is rather instituted in the church to manifest Christ as High Priest. The qualifications of the office are spiritual. Men and women must be sought who possess these spiritual qualifications, which are found in Acts 6:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-12. The task of deacons, though related to the material and physical needs of the people of God, is essentially a spiritual task (1962: 49-51). In article 25 of the *Church Order of Dordt* the office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit(cf. Van Oene, 1990:13-22; Hanko, 1962:51-52; Art. 25 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). The deacons must collect the alms and other contributions of charity. According to Hanko (1962: 49-51) there is no difference between the two words. Alms refer to gifts of mercy. Contributions of charity mean gifts in addition to the usual funds collected at the worship service. These include gifts of food, clothing, real estate, legacies, etc. Both, however, refer to gifts and not to payments. The article furthermore indicates the frequency of meetings, namely “the deacons shall meet monthly or more frequently as the need arises, to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the name of God; whereunto the ministers of the Word shall take good heed, and if necessary they shall be present” (Article 40 *Church Order of Dordt*; Hanko, 1962:78).

The care of the poor is entrusted to this office. Scripture specifically designates as deacons those appointed by the church to distribute alms to the poor and take care and serve as stewards of the common chest of the poor (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV, III: 9). All the offices, as provided in the church of Christ, are subject to Him alone. Their purpose for existence is to educate, discipline and comfort the congregation of Christ (Coertzen, 2004:111). They are to equip the church community for the good works and readiness for the coming of the master and realization of the Kingdom of God. The office is therefore a gift of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church, ordained for a very special service. Those called into office must serve, not as to themselves, but

to the great master, who came into the world to serve and not to be served. The church order contains the principles for the maintenance of God-given order and justice as well as proposed practical applications of the same principles (Vorster, 1999:14).

#### **5.5.3.4 The office of the evangelist**

The premise of the RCEA is that only male members of the RCEA are eligible to be called and ordained as evangelist of the RCEA. The *Constitution of the RCEA* therefore indicates that a person shall be ordained as an evangelist of the church is-

- a) He is a member of the church.
- b) He is of good reputation.
- c) He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- d) He has followed the theological, pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the synod.
- e) He testified to be called by God to this ministry.
- f) He is trustworthy and able to handle finances.
- g) He is accepted by the parish council for ordination to be an evangelist.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that the main tasks of the evangelist are:

- a) To preach and teach the word of God,
- b) To evangelize the unbelievers and the unreached,
- c) To teach the “Katekisma” and other church doctrines,
- d) To educate the elders and deacons,
- e) To conduct pastoral programs in the church sponsored schools,
- f) To shepherd the congregations,
- g) To admonish the congregations,
- h) To give pastoral care,
- i) To guard the church constitution and doctrines,
- j) To participate in the government of the church.

The local church councils assisted the ministers of the Word and evangelists in the ministry. Emphasis was put into the training of evangelists. The DRC Synod of Transvaal had shown the way in this earlier. The training and calling of evangelists resulted in many of the congregations



having evangelists. The founding of Plateau Bible School and the consequent training of the students there was a laudable move in the direction of moving the church into the path of self-governance. However, the improper training of evangelists was not a very wise idea, particularly considering the long-term implications it would have for the church work in many years to come. The DRC Synod of Transvaal trained during 1956 the first three ministers of the Word in Machakos. Until 1993, no training of ministers of the Word took place. Several Evangelists were trained in between this period. From the Synod records, the training of ministers of the Word was first done in Scott Theological College in Machakos. The African Inland Church and Mission own this seminary. Other ministers of the Word were trained at St. Paul's Theological College Limuru. The Anglicans, Presbyterian, Methodists and the Reformed churches jointly owned this college. Understandably, the RCEA as a small church could not afford to have its own seminary to train its ministers of the Word. This would require huge amounts of resources both material and human. Ministers of the Word prepared for ministry within the RCEA was therefore not being trained by the RCEA. They are being trained in a denominationally neutral environment. For example, Reformed church polity is not part of the curriculum. The emphasis of the RCEA theological formation program is not so much in grounding candidates for ministry in the RCEA in Reformed church polity. A glance at the *Constitution of RCEA* reveals that it has the ecumenical creeds well entrenched; the Apostles Creed, the Athanasius Creed and the Nicene Creed. What are missing are the Reformed creeds, the *Belgic Confession* (1561), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1618–19). It is difficult to understand why the Reformed Mission League, coming from a strong confessional background, could not help RCEA in this regard particularly when the *constitution* was being adopted in 1963.

The office of the evangelist has remained controversial in the Reformed Church of East Africa. This controversy has its roots in the establishment of the RCEA in Kenya. When the first missionary from the Dutch Reformed Church, South Africa, arrived, a few members of the indigenous people were given a six-month training course in order to put them in position to preach and teach among their own people. It was not deemed expedient to give the indigenous people full pastoral training, nor was it considered proper to ordain them as ministers of the Word. They were called “evangelists” and made the helpers of the missionaries (Bisem, 1983:18). After Kenya's independence, when the DRC, along with the vast majority of the Afrikaans community,

had left, the *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* from the Netherlands filled the vacuum left in the work in Kenya. The *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* became interested in evangelism and church planting. For this purpose, they expanded the number of nationals to be involved in the spreading of the Gospel. The evangelists was not up scaled to the status as minister of the Word although their course of study was broadened. They were put in an inferior position to the ordained missionaries and the few African pastors who had come into the RCEA from Tanzania. It was as if the idea of an Anglican ‘deacon’ (a sub-pastor) had entered into RCEA. From then onwards, the idea of an ‘evangelist’, as a separate and lower office to that of minister of the Word has been imbedded in the RCEA. The *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* indicated their willingness to pay the salary of one evangelist per local church that was planted.

There is an ensconced friction between pastors and evangelists in the RCEA. The evangelists tend to resent the pastors, who deal with them in a high-handed manner. The pastors of the RCEA jealously guard their ‘pastoral’ prerogatives to make sure that the evangelists do not usurp authority or prestige that they believe belongs to the pastorate.

Calvin makes in his *Institutes* a clear distinction between temporary and permanent offices (*Calvin Institutes* Book IV, Chapter 1.9). According to Calvin those who preside over the government of the Church are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (c.f. Eph. 4:11). The offices of apostles, preachers, and evangelists were temporary offices used by the Lord in the founding years of the New Testament Church. In the span of one generation, these offices ceased. The office which continued, and by which the Lord is pleased to rule His Church today, is described here with the phrase “pastors and teachers” (see Bouwman, 2000:39). Of these, only the two last have an ordinary office in the Church according to Calvin. The other three offices, apostles, prophets, evangelists, the Lord raised according Calvin at the beginning of his kingdom, and still occasionally raises them up when the necessity of the times requires. According to Calvin, these three functions “were not instituted in the Church to be perpetual, but only to endure so long as churches were to be formed where none previously existed. The office according Calvin nevertheless call extraordinary, because it has no place in churches duly constituted. pastors and teachers, with whom the Church never can dispense those teachers, preside not over discipline or

the administration of the sacraments, or admonitions, or exhortations, but the interpretation of Scripture only, in order that pure and sound doctrine may be maintained among believers.”

According to Bouwman (2000:39) the Lord used the offices of apostles and evangelists in the founding years of the New Testament Church. In the span of one generation, these offices ceased. Because of the status of the evangelists in the RCEA, there has been glamour, by many evangelists, to be ordained as ministers of the Word. In the Synods of 2000-2006, this motion was defeated, but this motion is being tabled every consecutive synod. During the Synod of 2007, the motion on the ordination for the evangelist came up for discussions. It was resolved that those evangelists who had served for more than ten years were eligible for ordination without requirements for further theological training (*RCEA Synod Report*, 2007:21). More specifically the task of the evangelists in the RCEA is to evangelize the unbelievers and the unreached, to teach “Katekismus” and other church doctrines, to educate elders and deacons, to conduct pastoral programs in the church-sponsored schools (Article 3.4.3 *Constitution of the RCEA 1992*). In many ways, the evangelist in the RCEA carries out the functions of a minister of the Word for example they preach and teach the Word of God, shepherd congregations, admonish congregation, give pastoral care, guard the church constitution and doctrines and participate in the government of the church. The huge difference between an evangelist and minister of the Word of the RCEA is that the minister of the Word is the only one who administers the sacraments and ceremonies of the RCEA.

The question currently in the RCEA is if these functions carried out by the evangelist are still relevant and needed (*CORAT Africa Report 1996:14*). The RCEA has an option of either upgrading the evangelist, through a process of the further training, and ordaining them to the office of the pastor. In many ways, the evangelist in the RCEA carries out the functions of a minister of the Word. In the representation to the church councils, he is ranked like a deacon. In the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992*, for one to qualify as an evangelist he has certain stringent requirements that he has to meet. A careful study of these requirements shows that they are the same for the pastor also.

To be an evangelist one needs to:

- a) be a member of the church,
- b) he is of good reputation,
- c) he testifies to be called by God to this ministry,

- d) he is biologically male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony,
- e) he has followed theological, pastoral and professional training and passed to the standards set by the synod,
- f) he is trustworthy and able to handle finances,
- g) he is accepted by the parish for ordination to be an evangelist.

Except for the last, requirement the rest is the same for the pastor. Yet the evangelist is not ranked equal with the other offices that are recognized by the synod (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992:22-23). The evangelist should be seen not as an assistant pastor. It is critical to realize that all offices have the same goal, that is, to serve the church of Jesus Christ. All offices are equal and only differ in function and not dignity and honour (Brink and De Ridder, 1980:3). The evangelist's office in the RCEA has grown out of the special context in Kenya. Faced with the shortage of the ministers of the Word, and with the need to cover new areas, and with foreign missionaries leaving, this office is of great importance to the church at this time and would be so in the long near future. It would therefore be advantageous for the RCEA to upgrade the training of the evangelists in order to ordain these evangelists as ministers of the Word.

The Reformed Mission League also has all but withdrawn its missionaries; this calls for RCEA to give this office to qualified and well able persons so that they can continue to carry out the duties of planting and growing new churches. The functions of a missionary have to be redefined. The office of the Evangelist, as currently constituted, will continue to be important with specific functions to carry in the ministry of the RCEA.

#### **5.5.3.5 The office of the professor in theology**

The premise of the RCEA is that only male members of the RCEA are eligible to be called and ordained as professor in theology of the RCEA. The *Constitution of the RCEA* therefore regulates that a person shall be ordained as a professor in theology of the RCEA if:

- a) He is a member of the church.
- b) He is of good reputation.
- c) He testifies to be called by God to this ministry.
- d) He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.

- e) He has followed theological, pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the Synod.
- f) He is qualified to teach theology in any public or Private University.
- g) He is accepted by the Synod for ordination to be a professor in theology.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that the main tasks of the professor of theology are:

- a) To preach and teach the word of God,
- b) To teach students at Institutes of High learning in the subjects he is specialized in,
- c) To advise the church in Theological issues,
- d) To promote further learning in the church (*Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*)

Usually the office of professor of theology is considered a part of the office of the ministry (Hanko, 1962:13; Van Oene, 1990:10-13; Hanko, 1962:12; Art. 2 *Church Order of Dort*, 1619). The authority of these offices differs. According to Hanko (1962:13) the prophetic office, which has the authority to teach, is to be found in the office of minister of the Word. The royal office, with its authority to rule, is found in the office of elder. The priestly office, with its authority to dispense the mercy of Christ, is found in the office of deacon (1962:13). No one is permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto (cf. Van Oene, 1990:10-13; Hanko, 1962:13; Art. 3 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3).

According to Hanko (1962:13) the duties referred to the professors of theology are ordinarily the duties of all ministers of the Word namely expound the Holy Scriptures and to uphold sound doctrine against heresies and errors. These duties are mentioned specifically in connection with the duties of professors because they are entrusted with the training of future ministers of the Word. The professors of theology must teach the future ministers of the Word to expound the Holy Scriptures and to uphold sound doctrine against heresies and errors. According to Hanko, (1962:13) professors accomplish this in the classroom, in preaching and speaking, in books and articles, at ecclesiastical assemblies of the churches in common (c.f. Article 18 *Church Order of Dordt*). Article 18 of the *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 goes historically back to Calvin. From the beginning, the Reformed churches believed strongly in an educated ministry. This requires professors. Some reformed churches across the globe do not consider the professor of theology any longer to occupy a separate office from the minister of the Word and therefore reduced the

offices to three (c.f. church orders of the URCSA, DRC, RCA, and PCN). According to Hanko (1962:13) the heresies ordinarily start in the seminaries.

Although the position of the teacher, also referred to as doctor, has sometimes been thought as a separate office, it seem that this position is the same as that of the minister of the Word, though it is more a specialized position for teaching theology. The guides the church in the interpretation of scripture. The teacher's main responsibility is to expound the scripture and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and false teachings and other un-biblical errors (Schaver, 1947:43). According to Calvin the long principle standing for both the teacher and the pastor in the church is to feed the people with the Word of God and to build the church publicly or privately with sound doctrine (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book IV, Chapter III, 4).

According to Van Dellen and Monsma (1967:16) the offices of ministers of the Word, elder and deacons find their origin in Christ, the Church's only Head and Supreme Ruler. Van Dellen and Monsma (1967:16) premise is that the three offices are nothing but continuations and extensions of Christ's three-fold office and that there is no office, which is superior or inferior to the other. There is parity among all church office-bearers in the concept of the three-fold office (1967:16). Van Dellen and Monsma (1967:20) add that the elders represent Christ the King for this is their specific duty and privilege to rule. Deacons represent Christ the Priest for this is their specific duty and privilege to show works of mercy (Van Dellen and Monsma, 1967:20). Ministers of the Word represent Christ the Prophet for this is their specific duty and privilege to make known the will of God to speak his Word according to Van Dellen and Monsma (1967:20). Osterhaven (1971:63) agrees that the three-fold office comes from Christ, in the Reformed Church the special offices are considered to be three in number: ministers of the Word, elders and deacons and each of these offices is derived from Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church and the lawgiver in Zion. According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:31) the notion of Reformed church polity principles is shaped by the work of reformers like John Calvin. Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:31) explains that Calvin explicated the principles of Reformed church polity in his reformation in Geneva. The church, distinct from the state, has its officers and laws, and is therefore an administrative government of its own (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:31).

The offices in the church should be seen as instruments that Christ has instituted, conserved and build his church on. He uses different people in different ministries to achieve His purpose for the church. The holders of the various offices are to be seen as servants of Christ in His church. They receive power and legitimacy from none other than the Head of the Church. Their main work is to build the congregation. The office-bearers have authority in as far as Christ has given them and do not derive that authority because of the position and reason of their high office (Vorster, 1999:15). The offices are necessary because, first, Christ used disciples, after which He imbued the apostles with the power of the Holy Spirit to become witnesses of works. These saw their calling as service to God and to Jesus Christ. In Ephesians, Paul shows the different ministries that Christ created for his church, namely:

- a) The Apostles,
- b) The Prophets,
- c) The Evangelists,
- d) The Pastors,
- e) The Teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

The people themselves through a popular vote elect the offices of the church, which represent the people (Berkhof, 1962:187). This does not mean that they receive their authority from the people, but that their authority comes from the Lord of the church, Christ. The authority of all office-bearers is based on the authority of the Word and therefore ultimately on Christ (Coertzen 2004:101). According to Vorster (2003:15), these offices are important for the following reasons:

- a) Christ deemed them necessary (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Cor. 5: 19; Rom.10:15).
- b) The ministry of the Word and Sacrament and the maintenance of church discipline are necessary for the being of the true church. The *Belgic Confession*, Article 30 reads as follows in this regard: “We believe that the true church must be governed by that spiritual polity which our Lord had taught us in His Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church; that by these means the true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means; also the poor and



distressed may be relieved and comforted, according to their necessities”  
(*Belgic Confession*, Article 30).

Since Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and because in Christ there all are one in him (Gal. 5:25), there ought to be no hierarchies of authority in the church. All ministries derive from Christ’s governance. All offices and officers may differ in function and responsibility but not in dignity and honour. For this reason, the constitution declares in Article 3:1 that:

Lest the one Congregation shall lord it over the other, the one Office over the other, the one Office-bearer over the other, the government of this Church is Presbyterian, which "form" the Church acknowledges as agreeable to the Word of God and proved in the experience of many Reformed Churches (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992:6).

This paragraph describes how authority as pertains to governance ought to be used. The Ministers of the Word and Sacrament by nature of their office exercise a particular authority that does include the power not to rule over another. The same is true of all other office-bearers, whose authority is always guarded by other officer bearers (Janssen, 2000:32; Hanko, 1962:12). Christ exercises His authority in the church through these office-bearers. In the early church, there were the extraordinary offices of apostle and prophet and evangelists (see Acts 14:4, 14; I Cor. 9:5, 6; II Cor. 8:23; Gal. 1:19; Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; II Tim. 4:5). These offices were limited according to Hanko to the period of direct revelation and became unnecessary with the closing of the Canon of Scripture (1967:16). According to Berkhof (1949:405) the apostles had certain special qualifications:

- a) They received their commission directly from God or from Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Gal. 1:1).
- b) They were witnesses of the life of Christ and especially of His resurrection (John 15:27; Acts 1:21,22; I Cor. 9:1).
- c) They were conscious of being inspired by the Spirit of God in all their teaching, both oral and written (Acts 15:28; I Cor. 2:13; I Thess. 4:8; I John 5:9-12).
- d) They had the power to perform miracles and used this on several occasions to ratify their message (II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4).
- e) They were richly blessed in their work as a sign of the divine approval of their labours (I Cor. 9:1, 2; II Cor. 3:2, 3; Gal. 2:8. (Berkhof, 1949:405 ).



According to Berkhof prophets differed from ordinary ministers of the Word in that, they spoke under special inspiration. Evangelists accompanied and assisted the apostles, and were sometimes sent out by these on special missions. Their work was to preach and baptize, but also to ordain elders (Tit. 1:5; I Tim. 5:22, and to exercise discipline, Tit. 3:10) (Berkhof, 1949:405).

The ordinary officers in the church include the offices of minister of the Word, elder (*presbuteroi* or *episkopoi*), and deacon (*diakonoi*) (Hanko, 1962:12). The *presbuteroi* (Acts 20:17,28; I Tim. 3:1; 4:14; 5:17,19; Tit. 1:5,7; I Pet. 5:1,2; Acts, 14:23; 15:6,22; 16:4; 20:17,28; 21:18; 5:14; Heb. 13:7,17; Rom. 12:8; I Thess. 5:12; Eph. 4:11) had the oversight of the flock that was entrusted to their care. They had to provide for it, govern it, and protect it, as the very household of God (Berkhof, 1949:405). Besides the *presbuteroi* the *diakonoi* are mentioned in the New Testament (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8,10,12; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11:29, Rom. 12:7; II Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13; Rev. 2:19; I Tim. 3:8-10,12 (Berkhof, 1949:405 ).

The *Church Order of Dordt* makes provision in article 8 for persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in preparation for the ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible to be ordained, shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense, and discretion, as also gifts of public address. The procedure for admittance for the ministry is that such persons should present themselves to the classis (if the synod approve). The classis should first examine them, and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches (cf. Van Oene, 1990:45-50; Hanko, 1962:22-23; Article 8 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). According to Hanko (1962:22-23) the Reformed churches have always insisted on a trained ministry. The provision of article 8 in the *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 is to be traced directly back to the Calvin Reformation. Soon after the Reformation was established in Geneva, Calvin began the Academy, where ministers of the Word were trained to serve the churches of the Reformation in all parts of Europe (1962:22-23). The exception spoken of in this article was allowed only in time of emergency. For example in the early history of the Reformed churches in Holland when as yet there were no institutions of higher learning they made kind of this provision indicated in *Church Order of Dordt* 1619 (1962:22-23). At the time following the

Synod of Dordrecht, when many ministers of the Word were deposed because of their refusal to sign the Canons, this article was again used (1962:22-23). According to Hanco (1962:22-23) since that time this article has been seldom used. The principles underlying this article are according to Hanco (1962:22-23) as follows:

- a) In the first place, while formal education is highly desirable, it is not essential. God may call to the office of the ministry whomever He pleases.
- b) In the second place, men with exceptional gifts may be endowed with these gifts from the Lord in preparation for the call to the ministry.

The article does not mean to dispense with all training. Hanco (1962:22-23) emphatically stresses that this article refers only to the regular course of study which the churches as a whole have set up as being, in their opinion, adequate for the preparation for the ministry. His understanding of the article is that the article merely makes provision that persons who seek for admittance for ministry under this article must have some training and must be examined by the classis (1962:22-23). The procedure then is as follows:

- a) There must be some assurance of these gifts on the part of the individual, who himself must take the initiative.
- b) He would apply through his own consistory for examination by the classis. His own consistory must equally be assured of the presence of these gifts. In case of disagreement, the individual would have the right to go to classis by way of appeal.
- c) The classis, with the approval of the synod, must then examine such a man to determine for itself whether these gifts mentioned in the article are present.
- d) There would be a certain period of probation, during which time the aspirant receives further instruction and brings a word of edification under the supervision of other ministers in the churches.
- e) Another preparatory examination (*praeparatoir* examination) would be held similar to the candidates of ministry.
- f) The aspirant would be declared eligible for a call (c.f. Bouwman, 2000: 48).

“Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and,

if necessary, of the classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the elders and the deacons” (Article 17 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). Hierarchy of any sort has no place in the church of Christ. Christ is the chief and only Office-bearer in His church, and all other office-bearers are under Him. According to Hanks (1962: 39) these three offices are different in kind. There are therefore no higher or lower offices (1963:39).

#### **5.5.4. The ecclesiastical assemblies of the RCEA**

With regard to the assemblies of the church, the *Constitution of the RCEA* provides for four ecclesiastical assemblies, namely local councils being the courts of the local churches, parish councils being court of the presbyteries, and the Synod being the Supreme Council of the whole church through its synodical meetings (Article 3.2 *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). In 1992 the consistory, parish, presbytery, and synod were approved as judicial courts of the RCEA. Article 3.2 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* 1992 establishes the foundation on the nature of authority in the RCEA. The RCEA exercise its power through these major courts. Article 29 of the *Church Order of Dordt* indicates four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies namely the consistory, the classical meetings, the particular synods and the general or national (synod). There were only two functional assemblies at the formation of the RCEA in 1959 namely the consistory and the presbytery.<sup>17</sup>

##### **5.5.4.1. The local church**

According to Hanks, the term consistory comes from the Latin *consistorium*, which means, “meeting place.” It is also referred to as “church council” (Hanks, 1962:58). The consistory in Reformed churches is ordinarily composed of the ministers of the Word and elders. Article 4.4 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that each local church shall have a local church council. The *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that a local church council shall consist of the following voting members namely all member of the elders committee, all members of the diaconal committee and the following co-opted members, a youth group representative, a Sunday school representative, a women fellowship representative, a representatives from sub committees if any, the parish minister and the parish evangelist. Article 4.4 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates

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<sup>17</sup> By the time this constitution was enacted there were only three congregations, which constituted the RCEA. These were Kitale North, Eldoret and Plateau congregations that were inaugurated in 1959. The four congregations were initially put together to form a Presbytery.

that the power and duties of a local church council shall be as follows: “It shall be the local court of the local church; it shall exercise disciplinary powers over the congregation and office-bearers of the local church. It shall employ, set the terms of service, discipline and terminate the service of her employees, as it shall deem necessary. It shall have power to recommend to the parish council that disciplinary action should be taken against the minister of the Word or evangelist.”

According to Article IV of the *Constitution of the RCEA*, the local church council in any area within their jurisdiction where church members are residing could establish a preaching post. The local congregation is therefore the first ecclesiastical assembly of the RCEA. The preaching post is regarded in the RCEA as the first step towards the establishment of a local church.

The preaching post does not have a church council. It is represented on the local church through a representative committee led by the local minister of the Word or the evangelist (Article IV *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992). According to Hanko, a local congregation is in itself a complete manifestation of the body of Christ (Hanko, 1962:75). The RCEA deviates from this Reformed church polity principle. Ordinarily in a Reformed church, the church council is composed of elders, deacons, evangelist and the minister of the Word. Article 29 Of the Belgic Confession states expression of the marks of a church are manifested locally through the preaching of the Word, administration of sacraments and the exercise of discipline (*Belgic Confession Article 29*). In the RCEA, the local church council meets at least once every month and its tasks and responsibilities are outlined as follows:

- i. It has authority in Church matters over the whole area appointed to it by the Parish Council.
- ii. It is the local court of the Local Church.
- iii. It assists the Evangelist in the arrangements for public worship.
- iv. It assists the Ministers in the arrangements of public worship and Sacraments.
- v. It supervises and control Local Church finance.
- vi. It approves suitable members to be ordained as elders.
- vii. It exercises disciplinary powers over the congregation and office-bearers of the Local Church.
- viii. It arranges for instructions for converts and arrange for reception into the Church.
- ix. It arranges for evangelization for the area appointed to it.
- x. It implements Synodical and Parish decisions.

- xi. It has power to raise funds in such manner as the Council shall deem fit, provided that the Council shall not have power to incur liability on behalf of the Church.
- xii. It has power to recommend to the Parish Council that a new Local Church be created from its jurisdiction.
- xiii. It employs, sets terms of service, disciplines and terminates the services of her employees, as it shall deem necessary.
- xiv. It has power to recommend to the Parish Council that disciplinary action should be taken against the minister or evangelist.
- xv. It has the power to establish a new preaching post.
- xvi. It establishes such Committees as it deems fit (*Article IV Constitution of the RCEA,, 1992*).

The local church council appoints the following persons to serve in a preaching post , namely the parish minister of the Word who serves as an adviser and guider, an evangelist who assist in evangelizing and teaching, one elder being a member of the local church council who is ordinarily resident in the area served by the preaching post, or an elder being a member of the local church council who does not ordinarily in the area served by the preaching post and such an elder be referred to as an associate elder. The members of a preaching post elect a preaching post committee comprising of not less than three and not more than five members, who will run the affairs of the Preaching Post under the guidance of the local church council. The preaching post committee elects a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer from among its members. The preaching post has the following persons in order to be allowed to form its own local church taking care of it: At least three ordained deacons and a local church council, which is elected by members of the new church. The elect is supervised by the local church A minister chairs the meeting of the local church council. In the absence of the minister, an elder of the local church, chairs the meeting. A minister of the Word and an evangelist serve as advisers and teachers of the new local church (*Article IV Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The membership of a local church is open to:

- a) All who have been baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and
- b) Who accept faith and worship of the church; and
- c) Who are willing to abide by the laws and customs of the church?

- d) Baptized members from the other churches, who are welcomed before the Congregation as soon as they are conversant with the church doctrine.
- e) Unbaptized Members of the other churches who have followed baptism class training and who are baptized by the church.
- f) Baptized children of the church members who share in privileges and obligations of membership of their parents until such a time when they are confirmed at the age of at least 12 years.

The local church with its minister of the Word is the essential basis of all the organizations of the RCEA. The local church is responsible for worshipping God in the Sunday Services, places of work and homes, pastoral care for all its members, evangelism of all who live within its bounds, service to fellow members.

According to Calvin the Church universal is the multitude collected out of all nations, who, though dispersed and far distant from each other, agree in one truth of divine doctrine, and are bound together by the tie of a common religion. In this way it comprehends single churches, which exist in different towns and villages, according to the wants of human society, so that each of them justly obtains the name and authority of the Church; and also comprehends single individuals, who by a religious profession are accounted to belong to such churches, although they are in fact aliens from the Church, but have not been cut off by a public decision (*Institutes of the Christian Religion Institutes Book IV, Chapter 3*). The *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision that except in special cases approved by the synod, parishes or local churches, only those members who have been admitted to the communion role are eligible for election to an office within the Church or take part in the election of others. Each local church has a local church council. The local church council consists of the following voting members: all members of the elders committee, all members of the diaconal committee and the following co-opted members: Youth group representative, Sunday school representative, Women fellowship representative, Representatives from sub committees if any, the parish minister and the parish evangelist. The local church council has the following office-bearers:

- a) Chairperson: the local church members from among the ordained elders of the local church elect the chairperson. The chairperson presides over the meetings of the local council.
- b) The vice chairperson: the local church members from among the ordained elders of the local church

elect the vice chairperson. The vice chairperson presides over meetings in the absence of the chairperson. He performs duties assigned to him by the chairperson.

- c) The secretary: the local church members from among the members of the local church elect the secretary. The secretary takes the minutes of the meeting of the local church council and is responsible for issuing notices for the meetings and circulating the agenda and carry out other secretarial duties.
- d) Vice-secretary: The vice secretary is elected by the local church members from among the members of the local church. The vice secretary performs secretarial duties as assigned to him by the secretary. In the absence of the secretary, the vice secretary performs all the duties of the secretary.
- e) Treasurer: the local church members from among either the ordained elders or the ordained deacons of the local church elect the treasurer. The treasurer is responsible for financial matters of the local church (*Article IV Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The powers and duties of a local church are as follows:

- a) It has authority in church matters over the whole area appointed to it by the Parish Council.
- b) It is the local court of the local church.
- c) It assists the evangelist in the arrangements for public worship.
- d) It assists the ministers in the arrangements of public worship and Sacraments.
- e) It supervises and controls local church finance.
- f) It approves suitable members to be ordained as elders.
- g) It exercises disciplinary powers over the congregation and office-bearers of the local church.
- h) It arranges for instructions for converts and arrange for reception into the church.
- i) It arranges for evangelization for the area appointed to it.
- j) It implements Synodical and Parish decisions.
- k) It has power to raise funds in such manner as the Council deems fit, if the Council has no power to incur liability on behalf of the church.
- l) It has power to recommend to the Parish Council that a new local church be created from its jurisdiction.
- m) It employs, sets the terms of service, discipline, and terminates the services of her employees, as it deems necessary.
- n) It has power to recommend to the Parish Council that disciplinary action should be taken against the minister or evangelist.
- o) It has power to establish a new preaching post.
- p) It establishes such Committees as it deems fit (*Article IV Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The local church council and its committees meet not less than once every two months, and conduct its business in accordance with standing orders made by the Synod. Members are notified and the agenda circulated at least 7 days in advance of the meeting.

According to the article 29 *Church Order of Dordt* there are four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies, namely the consistory, the classical meetings, the particular synods, and the general or national (synod) (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:57-59; Art. 29 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). In these assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and that in an ecclesiastical manner. From the very beginning of the Reformation in Geneva under Calvin, consistory meetings were held (Hanks, 1962:58). The growth of the churches led to the constitution of synods. In the Holland, the first synod was held in Emden in 1571. The term consistory comes from the Latin *consistorium*, which means, “meeting place (1962:58). It is also referred to as church council, The consistory is composed of the ministers of the Word and elders and the deacons (cf. Art. 37 *Church Order of Dordt*). The consistory possesses the authority of Christ to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to administer Christian discipline (1962:58).

According to Hanks (1962:58) the Reformed church polity principle regarding church federation is about the unity of the body of Christ. This unity is organic unity and cannot be imposed on the church. The local congregation is, in itself, a full and complete manifestation of the body of Christ (Hanks, 1962:58). In Reformed churches the congregations together seek to express their common unity in a federation of churches, the purpose of which is to confess in unison the truth of God in Christ, to fight together in the battle of faith against a common enemy, to fulfil a mutual calling, to satisfy a practical need which believers have of each other (Hanks, 1962:58). In these assemblies, ecclesiastical matters should only be transacted in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies, only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:59-61; Art. 30 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). “Finished” refers particularly to matters of dispute, which cannot be settled between the parties involved (cf. Van Oene, 1990:147-155; Hanks, 1962:61-64; Art. 31-32 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). According to the provisions made in the *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619 assemblies are limited to the treatment of ecclesiastical



matters; assemblies must perform their work in an ecclesiastical manner; major assemblies are limited in what ecclesiastical matters they may deal with (Hanko, 1962:60).

The *Church Order of Dordt* distinguishes between “major” and “minor” assemblies (Hanko 1962:60). The real authority of the Word of God rests in the local congregation. The article stipulates, “In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.” (1962:60). Matters which cannot be finished in the minor assemblies are brought to the major assemblies. These matters are brought from the consistory to the classis and then to the synod. Hanko (1962:60) sees the constituting of a consistory as the essential element in the organization of a congregation. Without the offices in the church, there can be no congregation as a manifestation of the body of Christ (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanko, 1962:74-75; Art. 38-39 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). This article dates back to the Synod of Emden. The article in its present form was essentially adopted by the Synod of Dordt in 1618-’19. The ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons have decisive vote in all matters and not merely advisory vote (Hanko, 1962: 73).

#### **5.5.4.2. The Parish**

The formation of Parishes and fixing of their boundaries, after consultation with concerned parishes, is the responsibility of the Synod. A parish council consists of a minister of the parish and equal numbers of representative elders, deacons and evangelists from local churches. Provision is being made in the *Constitution of the RCE* that the synod has right to sanction departure from the rule of equality of numbers when it sees good reason to do so. The following persons are co-opted members of the parish council, but are not entitled to vote, namely heads of department of the parish and persons given special assignments by the parish council (Article V *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992).

The members of the parish council elect the chairperson of the parish council. Only the minister of the parish or an ordained elder of the parish is eligible to be selected as chairperson of the parish council. The chairperson presides over the meetings of the parish council. The members of the parish council elect the secretary of the parish council. Only an ordained elder or an evangelist is eligible to be elected as secretary of the parish council: The secretary takes the minutes of the

meeting of the parish council and is responsible for issuing notices for the meetings and circulating the agenda and carrying out other secretarial duties. The minister of the parish council elects the treasurer of the parish council from among its ordained elders or ordained deacons. The treasurer is responsible for financial matters of the parish (*Article V Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The parish minister is in charge of the running of the Parish in cooperation with the Parish Council. The Parish Council has power to establish a new local church. A Parish Council exercises supervision over the ministers of the Word, the evangelists, other Parish employees, local churches, church advisers and the congregation within its boundaries. It permits students to preach in their local churches, ordains ministers of the Word, admits them to their charges in accordance with regulations of the Synod, and gives effect to all the church judicial regulations and decisions approved by the Synod (*Article V Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). A Parish Council meets at least quarterly and conducts its business under the standing orders as approved by the Synod. The Parish Council is charged with the responsibility of developing its Parish through various committees appointed by the Parish Council as the need arises (*Article V Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

#### **5.5.4.3. The Presbytery**

The power to group a number of Parishes to form a Presbytery resides with the Synod. Each Presbytery has a Presbytery Council. Article 6.6 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* indicates that each presbytery shall be autonomous and shall have decision-making powers, which is subjected to or limited by the decision of the synod. The following duties are bestowed on the Presbytery Council:

- a) Performs duties delegated by the Synod.
- b) Performs duties requested by any of the Parishes under it if the Presbytery Council agrees to the performance of such duties and if the performance of such duties is in conformity with the Constitution.
- c) Makes decision on matters relating to the Presbytery.
- d) Supervises the work of the Parishes under it (*Article VI of the Constitution of the RCEA 1992*).

The membership of the Presbytery Councils is confined to ministers of the Word, elders, deacons

and evangelists. The following persons are co-opted members of the Presbytery Council, but are not entitled to vote: heads of Department in the Presbyter and persons given special assignments by the Presbytery Council. Each Presbytery Council has an Executive Committee whose responsibility is to implement the decisions of the Presbytery Council. The Executive Committee comprises:

- a) The Moderator of the Presbytery Council who is the chairperson of the Executive Committee.
- b) The Secretary of the Presbytery Council is also the Secretary of the Executive Committee.
- c) The Treasurer of the Presbytery Council is also the Treasurer of the Executive Committee.
- d) Two ordained Elders to represent all Elders from the Presbytery.
- e) One ordained Deacon to represent all Deacons in the Presbytery.
- f) One Evangelist to represent all Evangelists in the Presbytery. (*Article VI Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The members of the Presbytery Council elects a Moderator from among the ministers of the Word of the Presbytery Council. The Moderator presides over the meetings of the Presbytery Council. The members of the Presbytery Council elect a secretary from among the ministers of the Word. The Secretary is responsible for all the administrative task of the Presbytery Council. The members of the Presbytery Council elect a treasurer from among its elders or deacons. The treasurer is responsible for financial matters of the Presbytery (*Article VI Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The Presbytery Council meets not less than twice in any calendar year. Each meeting is convened by the presbytery secretary as directed by the chairperson or ten members of the Presbytery Council, giving a notice of at least 14 days. If the presbytery secretary fails to circulate notices of the convening of a meeting within 7 days of the direction by the chairperson or by ten members of the Council, the deputy secretary has powers to convene a meeting. Meetings are held in rotation in the Parishes of the Presbytery (*Article VI Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

Each Presbytery is autonomous and has decision-making powers, which are subject to or limited by the decision of the Synod. The Presbytery Council has powers to raise or solicit for or borrow money or take such credit or credit facilities as the Council decides subject to the following:

- a) The resolution to solicit for or borrow money or take such credit or credit facilities must be supported by at least two third of the members of the Council, and must be approved by the

Synod's Executive Committee prior to borrowing or taking credit facilities.

- b) In the event that a Presbytery Council meeting cannot be convened within a reasonable time, the Presbytery Executive Committee is empowered to solicit for, borrow money, take such credit, or credit facilities as the Executive Committee resolves. Such resolution to be supported by Executive Committee provided that a meeting of the Presbytery Council be convened within 14 days to ratify the resolution of the Executive Committee. Upon a resolution being made by the Council to take credit or credit facilities, any two of the following are empowered to effect such resolution:
  - a) Moderator
  - b) Secretary
  - c) Treasurer (*Article VI Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

Article 29 of the Church Order of Dordt also mentions classes. The presbytery is a regional assembly (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanko 1962:57; 65, 115,118,120; Art. 29 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). The size of a presbytery depends upon the number of churches within an area. The boundaries of a presbytery ought to be determined by geographical factors. The presbytery is not a permanent body, nor indeed a super-consistory. Its sphere of activity is closely circumscribed (Hanko, 1962:59). According to Article 36 of the *Church Order of Dordt* 1619, the presbytery has the same jurisdiction over the church council as the general synod has over the presbytery (see Addendum 3). According to Hanko (1962:70) this article dates from the Synod of Middelburg, which was held in 1581. This article deals with the relation between the various ecclesiastical assemblies: consistory, classis, and synod. The word “jurisdiction comes from the Latin: *jus* (law) and *dico* (I speak) (Hanko, 1962:59). The English term has therefore legal connotations. The Latin has *auctoritas* means “authority.” (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanko, 1962:70; Art. 36 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; see Addendum 3). Van Dellen and Monsma points out the following differences between the jurisdiction of a consistory over a congregation and the jurisdiction of a major assembly over a minor assembly:

- a) A difference of origin. The major assemblies derive their authority from the consistories, the consistories from Christ.
- b) A difference of necessity. The major assemblies are necessary for the well-being of the churches, the consistories for the existence of the churches.

- c) A difference of essence. The major assemblies have derived an accidental jurisdiction. The consistories have original and essential jurisdiction.
- d) A difference of duration. The jurisdiction of major assemblies ceases when the major assemblies adjourn. The consistories' jurisdiction continues.
- e) A difference of purpose. The major assemblies exist for the sake of particular churches; consistories do not exist for the sake of major assemblies but have independent existence (Hanko, 1962:71).

The jurisdiction of the major assemblies is an authority, which is rooted in the binding power of the Word of God and the Church Order; an authority within the church connection; an authority within their own prescribed sphere of activity (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanko, 1962:59; Art. 30 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619).

#### **5.5.4.4. The Synod**

The Synod of the RCEA functions as the supreme court of the RCEA. The decisions of the Synod are final. The task of the Synod includes amongst others to:

- a) Draw the policy of the RCEA.
- b) Appoint, discipline and dismiss pastors according to such rules as the Synod may set from time to time.
- c) Set terms of service of employees of the RCEA.
- d) Elect the moderator, general secretary, honorary treasurer, deputy moderator and deputy general secretary.
- e) Elect the members of the Executive Committee.
- f) Remove at any time any officials elected by the Synod on disciplinary grounds.
- g) Review the appointment and termination of service of Heads of Department.
- h) Receive, discuss and if satisfied adopt the annual reports of the moderator, general secretary and honorary treasurer. The report of honorary treasurer includes the audited statements for the previous fiscal year.
- i) Install special committees to deal with specific issues as they arise. Such committees operate under the Executive Committee.
- j) Perform such other functions as set out in the Constitution (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992).

A Synod comprises of the office-bearers of the Synod, representatives from the Presbyteries as elected with the following composition from each Presbytery, namely the moderator, secretary, two elders, one deacon, one evangelist, nonvoting guests and experts invited by the Synod office-bearers (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). The members of the Synod elect a moderator from among the ministers of the Word. The moderator has both a deliberative and casting vote. The moderator is the official representative of the church, church leader of ceremonies, legal representative of the Church, chairperson of the Synod and Executive Committee (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). The members of the Synod elect a general secretary from among the ministers of the Word. The general secretary is the chief executive officer of the RCEA. The general secretary has a deliberative vote, has but not a casting vote in the Synod and in the Executive Committee. He is responsible for the day-to-day business of the head office of the RCEA and the church programmes of the RCEA. He is the secretary of the Synod and the Executive Committee (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*).

The members of the Synod elect a deputy moderator and a deputy general secretary from among the ministers of the Word. The deputy moderator has a deliberative vote. The deputy moderator resumes the duties of the moderator in his absence (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). The deputy general secretary deputises for the general secretary and performs such duties as the general secretary delegates. The deputy general secretary acts in the position of general secretary during the absence of the general secretary. The deputy general secretary has a deliberative vote in the Synod and the Executive Committee (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). The Members of the Synod elect the honorary treasurer from among the candidates proposed by the Executive Committee.

No person can be elected as honorary treasurer unless he is a qualified accountant and a member of the RCEA. The honorary treasurer is accountable to the Executive Committee and the Synod in financial matters. He serves as adviser to the Executive and Synod Council with regard to the financial matters of the RCEA (Article VII *Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*). In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters.

It must be carefully observed that the term ‘officers’ does not refer to ‘office-bearers’ and must

not be confused with them. The officers of ecclesiastical assemblies are not of a superior rank among their fellow office-bearers and they exercise no ecclesiastical authority within the assembly. Their powers of functionaries in the church are limited by the *Constitution of the RCEA*. Their powers are not over an assembly but only within it and subject to it. The Executive Committee of the RCEA is composed of 14 voting members, elected by a board. The moderator, deputy moderator, general secretary and deputy general secretary and honorary treasurer are official members of the Executive Committee with deliberative votes. The moderator has a casting vote. The composition of the Executive Committee is as follows:

Pastors, including the Moderator, the Deputy Moderator, General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary, four elders, two deacons, two evangelists and the honorary treasurer. The Departmental Secretaries are co-opted as non-voting members as need shall arise. The Moderator of the Synod acts as the Moderator of the Executive Committee. The General Secretary of the Synod acts as the secretary of the Executive Committee (*RCEA Synod Report 1979:12, Constitution of the RCEA, 1992*)

The functions of the Executive Committee include amongst other to help the Synod Council to propagate the Gospel, to serve the church in assisting the needy church members, to attend to the training council members, committees and employees of the RCEA to implement the resolutions of the Synod, to appoint qualified, experienced and professional departmental secretaries, to demote, or terminate, or take other necessary actions against departmental secretaries, subjected to the review and approval of the Synod, to assist the departmental committees to appoint qualified, experienced and professional RCEA personnel, to appoint committees as mandated by the Synod, to set down procedures for the management of the funds and properties of the RCEA, to make proposals to the Synod on matters affecting the RCEA, to draft long term plans to be approved by the Synod, to receive and discuss the reports of departmental committees, to approve the departmental budgets, capital investment, to report on an annually basis their actions to the Synod Council, to represent the RCEA in national and international bodies, to perform functions as delegated by the Synod to perform other functions as set out in the *Constitution (Constitution of the RCEA 1992)*.

The office-bearers of the RCEA are the moderator, the deputy moderator, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary and the honorary treasurer. Their duties include the following:

- a) The office-bearers discuss any agenda prepared by the Moderator and General Secretary regarding the affairs of the Church.
- b) The office-bearers prepare the agenda for the Executive Committee and implement the Executive Committee decisions.

The Executive Committee of the RCEA have the right to establish departments and appoints Committee. In the first meeting, the Committee elects the chairperson and treasurer from among the members. The head of the department is the secretary of the Committee, unless otherwise provided. The head of the department is a well-qualified and professionally trained person in that particular department. The Committees have power to discipline or terminate the service of its employees, if such discipline and termination of service is reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee carries out demotion, termination of service and other disciplinary action of the heads of departments, if such discipline and termination of service is reviewed and approved by the Synod. The treasurer controls the finance of the department and advise the Committee of the financial position of the department (see *Constitution of the RCEA 1992*)

#### **5.5.5. Authority of ecclesiastical assemblies and office-bearers of the RCEA**

The above-mentioned articles of the *Constitution of the RCEA* show clearly the deviation in the *Constitution of the RCEA*, from Reformed or Protestant church orders for example the church orders. According to Hanko, the synod is the denomination-wide assembly. The representatives are not from the churches, but from the classes (Hanko, 1962:59). Every year, or if needs be four or five or more neighbouring classes ordinarily meet as a Particular Synod, to which each classis shall delegate two ministers of the Word and two elders. At the close of both, the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with the advice of the classis the time and place of the next Synod (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanko, 1962:86; Bouwman, 2000:128-130; Art. 47-49 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). Each synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighbouring synod or synods in such manner, as they shall judge



most conducive to general edification (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:86; Bouwman, 2000:128-130; Art. 47 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3).

Each synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by synod, both as to what pertains to the government and to the respective classes resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future ministers of the Word. The classes in eventual difficulties extend help to the classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. The classes also keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to synod, and, if it were demanded, give reasons. They should not be discharged from their service before and until synod itself discharges them (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:86; Art. 48 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). .

The date of meeting and the calling church is decided upon by the previous synodical meeting. The calling church decided the meeting place, announces the meeting, makes provision for the lodging of delegates, is responsible for the pre-synodical prayer service, and provides for other material necessities of the meeting (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:86; Art. 47 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3).

Article 49 of the *Church Order of Dordt* speaks of “delegating some to execute everything ordained by synod.” This article empowers the general synod also to appoint committees to carry out various aspects of the work of the churches (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:86; Art. 49 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). A listing of these committees with their rules and constitutions are to be found in the back of the Church Order. These committees are not in any respect autonomous (cf. Van Oene, 1990:161-165; Hanks, 1962:87; Art. 50 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619).

This article and the following one speak of the officers of the assemblies. The term ‘officers’ in the *Church Order of Dordt* does not refer to ‘office-bearers’ as in the RCEA and must not be confused with them. The officers of ecclesiastical assemblies are not of a superior rank among their fellow office-bearers and they exercise no ecclesiastical authority within the assembly. The *Church Order of Dordt* limits their powers of functionaries in the church. Their powers are not

over an assembly but only within it and subject to it.

Article 35 of Church *Order of Dordt* speaks of two officers (cf. Van Oene, 1990:165-169; Hanks, 1962:68; Bouwman, 2000: 130-131; Art. 35 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). “The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in speaking; and properly to discipline them if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises” (cf. Van Oene, 1990:165; Hanks, 1962:68; Art. 35 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). This article originated with the Synod of Emden (1571), which synod referred it to the presidents of regional and general synods.

In 1581, the Synod of Middelburg placed this article among the rules governing all assemblies and applied it to church council and presbytery as well. The president has the right to take part in the discussion, but must then surrender the chair to the vice-president. According to Hanks, the president is not a presiding officer of the churches met in assembly, but of the assembly alone; his powers are limited to the assembly and he can function only within it; the assembly itself ceases to exist when the meeting is adjourned. The exception to this is the consistory, which is composed of the office-bearers of the church (Hanks, 1962:68). Fundamentally, the office presides the church (Spoelstra, 1989:27-28). Through the preaching of the Word and the Spirit, Christ the Head of the church, summons a congregation for him and leads his people out of the darkness into the light.

Article 3.1 of the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* states clearly that the authority is restricted: “Least the one congregation shall lord it over the other, the one office over the other, the one Office-bearer over the other, the government of this church is Presbyterian, which ‘form’ the church acknowledges as agreeable to the Word of God and proved in the experience of many Reformed churches.” This article in the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* is based upon one of the fundamental principles of Reformed church polity, namely the first article, which was adopted by the Convention of Wezel and at the Synod of Emden (1571) “No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers of the Word, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons” (*Church order of Dordt Article 84*). According to Hanks (1962:140) the

fundamental principle underlying this article is the autonomy of the local congregation. The Reformed churches were deeply convinced that Scripture teaches that each congregation is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. Christ rules, through the ordained office-bearers, over His people in each individual congregation. From this it follows that there must be equality — equality between individual and autonomous congregations, and equality between all office-bearers. According to Hanks (1962:140) the hierarchical church polity of the Roman Catholic Church directly opposed this principle. From the beginning of the Episcopal system as it developed in the Roman Catholic Church, one congregation lorded it over another congregation; one office-bearer over another office-bearer. This article was incorporated into the *Constitution of the RCEA* 1992 in order to denounce any form of hierarchy in the RCEA.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. No office-bearer may lord over other office-bearers. Since each church is a complete body of Christ, no church may impose itself over another church (*Free Reformed Church in Australia Church Order, Article 80*). This Reformed church polity principle imply that in the church of Jesus Christ there is no room for domineering by either a minister of the Word over other ministers of the Word, nor a consistory, nor over another consistory, nor elder over another elder (Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanks, 1962:140; Bouwman, 2000:29, 56, 185; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:32). Art. 31 of the *Belgic Confession* also affirm the “no lording” principle and this principle were incorporated into the *Church Order of Dordt*. No lording over others is a fundamental principle in Reformed church polity (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:32). Among ministers of the Word, there is complete equality and in the Presbyterian churches, there is no such thing as clericalism (Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanks, 1962:140; Bouwman, 2000:29, 56, 185; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619).

“No lording” is the first article which was adopted by the Convention of Wezel — although that article was in different form. At the Convent of Wezel (1568) Calvin’s *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* was amended (Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanks, 1962:140; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; Bouwman, 2000:29, 56, 185; Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2014:32). The Convent of Wezel stated as the first article of its church order: ‘No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers’ (cf. Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanks, 1962:140; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; Bouwman, 2000:29, 56, 185; Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:32). The

convent of Wezel paved the way for the organization of the Reformed Church in the Lowlands for more than two centuries and has influenced the church polity developments of the Reformed churches in the global South (c.f. Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanko 1962:140; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2014:32).

At the Synod of Emden (1571) the “no lording” article about was adopted. The premise of the Synod was that Christ rules, through the ordained office-bearers, over His people in each individual congregation. There should be equality – equality between individual and autonomous congregations, and equality between all office-bearers. The “no lording” principle was directly opposed by the hierarchical church polity of the Roman Catholic Church. From the beginning of the Episcopal system as it developed in the Catholic Church, one congregation lorded it over another congregation, one office-bearer over another office-bearer (c.f. Van Oene, 1990:337-339; Hanko, 1962:140; Art. 84 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619; Bouwman, 2000:29,56,185).

Article 3.1 of the *Constitution of the RCEA* has therefor-historical roots within the Reformed church polity. According to Hanko, this is a principle, which must be jealously guarded, “because each congregation (whether large or small) is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ, all congregations are equal in the federation of churches and none has the right to lord it over any other congregation. The same is true of office-bearers. All ministers of the Word are equal in authority and no minister may lord it over any other minister. All elders and deacons are equal and none may lord it over any other office-bearer, either in his own congregation or in another (Hanko, 1962:140). It means no minister of the Word may lord it over an elder or deacon, and *vice versa* as well. All office-bearers, occupying their own offices, are also equal in authority, each manifesting the authority of Christ in the way peculiar to the office he or she occupies.

The *Church Order of Dordt* indicates that four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, particular synod and the general synod (cf. Van Oene, 1990:132-141; Hanks, 1962:57-59; Article 29 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). In doing so, the RCEA follows in the tradition of many reformed churches across the globe. The ecclesiastical assemblies exercise authority that Jesus Christ has granted to the church. All the authority of the church is ecclesiastical and must be exercised within the limits provided for in the Word of God by Christ through the Holy Spirit (Brink and De Ridder, 1980:135).

At the Synod of Emden (1571), adjustments to Calvin's *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* were approved (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:32). The Synod of Emden emphasized among other matters the binding nature of decisions of synods (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:32). The church order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and The Hague (1586), before being adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Although these synods took important decisions, and applied changes with a view to changing socio-political circumstances to the church ordinances, the old church organization of Emden, remain, albeit in modified form Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014:33). The mandate that is given to the church is based on the authority the Lord gives in Matthew 28:18-20: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always ..."

In the *Constitution of the RCEA*, the relationship between the various assemblies is not spelled out clearly. There is ambiguity in the way authority is being exercised by the four assemblies. The *Constitution of the RCEA* does not clearly state that the local church is a complete expression of the body of Christ. This leaves room for the Parish Council to impose decisions on the Local Council. The Synod has the power to overrule the decisions of the Presbytery Council (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Chapter 4.4. vi. A; Chapter 5.5). This goes against the Reformed principle of parity of offices and officers, as stated in the *Constitution*, "lest one congregation shall lord over the other congregation, the one office over the other, the one office bearer over the other, the government of this church is Presbyterian, which 'form' the church acknowledges as agreeable to the Word of God and proved in the experience of many Reformed churches." The boundaries,

functions and powers of the assemblies, the executive committee, and parish council should be revisited in the envisaged church order the RCEA.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision that ministers of the Word and evangelists can be transferred by the Synod to the local churches or parishes. The task to call a minister of the Word ordinarily resides in Reformed churches in the local congregation, but in the RCEA, the responsibility to call ministers of the Word resides with the Synod. The Synod, through its executive committee may appoints committees for various functions including one on training and staffing, without the Presbytery, the Parish and the Local congregations being consulted. This has led to sometimes to the acrimonious rejection of ministers of the Word and evangelists by the parishes and local congregations. The Synod of the RCE acts as a higher and a super structure and loads over the rest of the church (Vorster, 2003:54). The decision of the Synod is final and binding to all presbyteries, parishes and local churches. In the RCEA, every council has an “executive committee,” and in practice these function as if they were the court it selves. The authority that a court of the church possesses is not an original authority. When this principle is neglected, there is the distinct possibility that the court itself will become nothing more than an assembly will whose sole purpose is to uphold the actions of its committees. In some instances, the actions of the Executive Committee have even superseded the decisions of the ecclesiastical assemblies of the RCEA. This has severely undermined the place and the effectiveness of the courts.

In the RCEA, officers of the courts for example the moderator, clerk or secretary are given powers that go far beyond the function of the court. In practice, the general secretary acts as though he is *de facto* the bishop of the RCEA. The *Constitution of the RCEA* bestows executive powers to the general secretary. The general secretary controls all the departments in the church, including the finance. This gives him enormous powers (*RCEA Synod Report*, 1994:23). This has been a source of conflict between the moderator and the general secretary. According to Reformed and Presbyterian polity, the officers of a court do not have more authority in the church than the major assemblies.

### 5.5.6. Administration of church discipline in the RCEA

The Synod is the Supreme Court for the RCEA in matters ecclesiastical discipline. John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Book IV Chapter 12.5) states that church discipline serve the following aims:

- i. That they who lead a filthy and infamous life may be called Christians, to the dishonour of God, as if his holy church [cf Eph. 5:25-26] were a conspiracy of wicked and abandoned men,
- ii. That the good be not corrupted by the constant company of the wicked." Corinthians 5:6,7,
- iii. That those overcome by shame for their baseness begin to repent."(c.f. Bouwman 2000:103).

The *Constitution of the RCEA* deals with the issue of church discipline in Article 10. This article stipulates the types of offenses that warrant disciplinary action that can be taken against a church member,<sup>18</sup> elders and deacons,<sup>19</sup> evangelists,<sup>20</sup> ministers of the Word,<sup>21</sup> heads of departments,<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A member who professes unchristian teaching or lives an unchristian life, and who after repeated and loving counsel refuse to abandon his errors and wickedness, and who fail to respond to the local church councils admonition, shall be disciplined by the local church council under the guidance of the parish pastor. The measure of discipline shall be withholding the Sacraments and finally excommunication. A member who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the parish council for final judgement. Ex-communicated members or members who are excluded for the Sacraments and who show repentance and demonstrate genuine reform shall be re-installed as members with full rights (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Articles 10.1).

<sup>19</sup> An elder or a deacon, who has been put under discipline as per Article 10.1., shall be removed from office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures. An elder or deacon, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the parish council in consultation with the local church council. An elder or deacon who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the Presbytery Council for final judgement (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Article 10.2 ).

<sup>20</sup> An Evangelist, who has been put under discipline as per Article 10.1., shall be removed from office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures. An evangelist, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the Parish Council in consultation with the department dealing with the evangelist's duties. An evangelist who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the Presbytery Council for final judgement (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 10.3 ).

<sup>21</sup> Any disciplinary action as mentioned in article 8.1. Regarding a minister shall not be taken by the Local Church Council but by the Parish Council in consultation with the Presbytery Council. Any disciplinary action shall result in his removal from office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures. A minister, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the Presbytery Council in consultation with the Synod Executive Committee. A minister, who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action, shall appeal to the Synod for final judgement. Any minister, who is removed from the office, shall hand over his ministerial garments to the Executive Committee of the Synod and his ministerial role shall cease (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 10.4 ).

<sup>22</sup> Article 10.1 shall govern discipline and the procedure thereof for the departmental heads. Disciplinary action may include termination of service. A departmental head, who fails to perform his church duties, shall have his services terminated by the Synod Executive Committees. A departmental Head, who is not satisfied with the disciplinary actions or his termination, shall appeal to the Synod for final judgement (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 10.5 ).



other church employees<sup>23</sup> and missionaries.<sup>24</sup> Punishments for the various offenses range from admonition, removal from office, withholding of sacraments to ex-communication. The four ecclesiastical courts of the RCEA, namely the local church council, Parish Council, Presbytery Council and the Synod Executive Committee, deal with disciplinary action. For example, the local church council deal with the disciplinary cases of individual members and of elders and deacons while the Parish council will deal with disciplinary cases of ministers of the Word and other office-bearers. The Presbytery Council, in consultation with the parish council, has the right to suspend a minister of the Word pending the final decision of Synod. The *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision for the appellant to appeal to a higher court if not satisfied with the decision of a lower court.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* recognizes the importance of discipline in the church. It is given a prominent place in the constitution. Proper administration of church discipline is given as one of the basis for any relationship between the RCEA and other churches. The *Constitution of the RCEA* states that “the church, believing it to be the will of Christ that His disciples shall be one in the Father and in Him, that the World may believe that the father has sent Him, recognizes the obligation to seek and promote union with other churches in which it finds the Word of God to be purely preached, the sacraments administered, according to Christ’s ordinance, and discipline rightly exercised (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992:10). Members of the RCEA are promise at their confirmation to submit them to the government of the church and if they should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit them to admonition and discipline (*RCEA Taratibu ya Ibaada* 1979:38).

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<sup>23</sup> Employees who are members of the Church shall be governed by the regulations of discipline as laid down in Article 10.1. Disciplinary action may include termination of services. Employees, who are not members of the church, shall be under the employment regulations and standing orders of the church regarding employees. Violation of these regulations shall be handled by the Committee under which the employee is working and may lead to disciplinary action and finally termination of services. An employee who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action or termination of services may appeal to the Synod Executive Committee for final judgement (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 10.6).

<sup>24</sup> Any disciplinary action as mentioned in article 10.1. Regarding a missionary shall not be taken by the Local Church Council, but by the office-bearers in consultation with the Synod’s Executive Committee. Any disciplinary action shall result in the termination of his services, as long as he is under those disciplinary measures. A missionary, who fails to perform his church duties, shall have his services terminated by the Synod’s Executive Committee after consulting the supporting missionary organization. A missionary, who is not satisfied with the disciplinary actions or termination, shall appeal to the Synod for final judgement (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992 Article 10.7).



The purpose of church discipline is not indicated in the *Constitution of the RCEA*. There is no section explaining the principles of church discipline in the *Constitution of the RCEA*. Vorster indicates that execution of church discipline is to honour God, (2) to reconcile of the sinner with the church and to removal the offense from the church of Christ (2003:127). The *Constitution of the RCEA* does not give procedures to the ecclesiastical assemblies with regard to disciplinary matters. Matthew 18:15-17 for example provides three important steps or phases. These are:

- i. Private admonition,
- ii. The admonition in the presence and with the help of witnesses and
- iii. The action by the church.

The RCEA needs to develop a disciplinary procedure regarding church discipline based on reformed church polity principles. Article 71-81 makes provisions for regulations regarding the executing of church discipline. Article 71 of the *Church Order of Dordt* (1619) I indicates the spiritual character of church discipline, “Inasmuch as Christian discipline is spiritual (in character) and exempts no one from civil trial and punishment, as besides civil punishment ecclesiastical censure is necessarily demanded in order to remove the offense from the church of Christ” (cf. Van Oene, 1990:298-306; Hanko, 1962:112; Article 71 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). Church discipline is spiritual in its nature. Church discipline seeks to uphold the glory of God in the church and among His people. Church discipline also seeks the welfare of the church as well as the preservation of the sinner (Vorster, 2003:127). The above mentioned principles of church discipline are to be applied on the basis of Christian love, so that the sinner is led to a wholehearted repentance and restoration.

The *Church Order of Dordt* (1619) attends to censure and admonition in Articles 71-80.

- a) Article 71 — the character of Christian discipline,
- b) Articles 72, 73 — Reconciliation of private sins.
- c) Articles 74-78 — The Reconciliation and censure of public sins,
- d) Articles 79, 80 — The Discipline of Office-bearers, including suspension and deposition from Office,
- e) Article 81 — *Censura Morum*.

The exercise of Christian discipline is itself the preaching of the gospel. The Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord’s Day XXXI, speaks of the kingdom of heaven being opened and shut both by

the preaching of the gospel and the exercise of the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:16-19 and Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:23; Romans 16:17; I Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14; I Timothy 5:1, 2; I Corinthians 5:1-5).

Article 71 of the *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619 distinguishes Christian discipline from civil punishments. Both civil punishment and ecclesiastical censure both have to do with an individual's conduct. Ecclesiastical discipline however is spiritual, i.e., it has to do with the opening and closing of the kingdom of heaven; it deals with a member of the church of Christ as it is manifested in its institutional form; it has as its goal the salvation of the members and the maintenance of the purity of the church; it is based upon the law of the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the Word of God. The exercise of the keys by the church is to bring the sinner who strays from God's precepts to repentance.

The purpose of discipline is to reconcile the sinner with the church and his/her neighbour and to remove the offense out of the church of Christ.

The *Church Order of Dordt* mentions two classes of sins for which censure is applied, namely error in doctrine and offense in conduct, namely private and public offences: "In case anyone errs in doctrine or offends in conduct, as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed" (cf. Van Oene, 1990:298-306; Hanks, 1962:116; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Art. 72 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). All sins are equally serious and demand repentance before God. This article was adopted by the Convention of Wezel, 1568. The Convention of Wezel held that Matthew 18 applies only to sins of conduct; and that, therefore, sins of doctrine must be reported directly to the consistory, even though they are of a "private character." In 1571 the Synod of Emden decided that also sins of doctrine, when of a private character, must be treated according to Matthew 18 (cf. Van Oene, 1990, 298-306; Hanks, 1962:116; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Art. 72 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). Matthew 18:15-17 reads as follows: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

According to Article 74 if anyone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the consistory (cf. Van Oene, 1990:298-306; Hanko, 1962:119; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Art. 74 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3). The basic idea of Article 74 was already expressed by the Convention of Wezel. The Synod of Emden formulated the article (cf. Van Oene, 1990, 308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). Public sins, according to Article 75, are of two kinds. The first kind is a sin which is, in its very nature, public. That is, the congregation, in whole or in large part, is aware of the sin. The second kind is a sin that was private but becomes public because the admonition of the church was despised.

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it in the consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighbouring churches or of the classis (Article 75 *Church Order of Dordt* 1619; see Addendum 3).

That is, the consistory made every effort to bring the sinner to repentance, but the sinner refused. The consistory was forced, because of this continued impenitence, to announce the matter to the congregation (cf. Art. 77). There is, then, repentance and reconciliation only after the sin has been announced (cf. Van Oene, 1990, 308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt*; see Addendum 3 ). Article 76 of the *Church Order of Dordt* deals with the discipline of unrepentant sinners, we come to the very essence of Christian discipline:

Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the consistory shall at last precede to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose

according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with advice of the classis.

This article dates back to the Calvin Reformation in Geneva. Discipline must first of all be suspension from the table of the Lord. According to Hanko this does not only involve barring the sinner from communion lest the Lord's Table be desecrated; but it also involves barring from all membership privileges. Such an impenitent sinner has no right to the sacrament of baptism, to vote on a congregational meeting, to protest and appeal in matters other than his own case (cf. Van Oene, 1990:308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt*). This is sometimes called *stille censure* or 'silent censure' because the congregation is not yet made aware of the action of the consistory (cf. Art. 77). This is sometimes also called *excommunication minor*. It is distinguished from *excommunication major*, of which the last part of the article speaks (cf. Van Oene, 1990:308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*; see Addendum 3). Suspension from the Lord's Table is essentially excommunication; but the process of censure in the church of Christ is over a period of time. Finally, the article speaks of the fact that suspension must be followed by excommunication. Before excommunication, however, various admonitions must be directed to the sinner (cf. Art. 77).

Final excommunication is referred to as "the extreme remedy" (cf. Van Oene, 1990: 308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*). Article 77 makes provision for three admonitions (cf. Van Oene, 1990:308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*).

In the first public admonition the name of the sinner is not mentioned "that he be somewhat spared."

In the second public admonition the name of the sinner is mentioned. This can only be done with the advice of the classis. This advice of classis must be sought a prior to excommunication so that all possibility of partiality is guarded against. The advice of classis is important. The classis, before it passes judgment, must learn whether a sin has been committed, whether there is evidence of

impenitence, whether Article 76 has been followed, whether the first admonition to the congregation has taken place, and if the labour of the consistory is sufficient.

In the third public admonition the consistory informs the congregation of its determination to proceed with excommunication and informs the congregation of the date which has been set for this (cf. Van Oene, 1990:308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*). If an objection is raised by a member of the congregation, the consistory must seriously consider such an objection. If the matter cannot be resolved between the complainant and the consistory, the complainant has the right to appeal to classis (cf. Van Oene, 1990: 308-317; Hanko, 1962:123-128; Article 76-78 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*).

Articles 79, 80 of the *Church Order of Dordt* attend to the discipline of the office-bearers:

When ministers of the divine Word, elders, or deacons have committed any public, gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately, by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office shall be subject to the judgment of the classis, with the advice of the delegates of the synod mentioned in Article 11 (Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*; see Addendum 3). Furthermore, among the gross sins which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication (Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*; see Addendum 3).

No classis or synod may suspend or depose officer bearers. The execution of suspension and deposition belongs the consistory (cf. Van Oene, 1990:323; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt*). Any charges against an office bearer must be

thoroughly investigated. If an office bearer is deposed from office but repents of his/her sin he/she must not be further censured.

Article 79 speaks of “public, gross sin, which require punishment from the civil magistrates” (cf. Van Oene, 1990:323; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt*; see Addendum 3). Article 80 lists these sins, namely false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre. These sins bring disgrace upon the church. Private sins committed by an office bearer, but repented of does not need to be reason for suspension or deposition unless the sin be of such a kind that it makes the person unworthy to hold the office entrusted to him/her. In this case, the deposition would have to be announced to the congregation, along with the reasons for deposition and the fact that the sin has been confessed. The list of sins in article 80 is not intended to be exhaustive. These gross sins are as follows:

- i. False doctrine or heresy. Such sins as these would be violations of the promise made at the time the Formula of Subscription was signed. The sins are deliberate and conscious perversions of the truth contained in the confessions of the church.
- ii. Public schism. The sin of public schism is the sin of dividing the congregation or the churches into factions, arousing the people of God to discord or mutiny. The motives may be those of self-justification or defiance of authority in the church or desire for personal self-advancement and the like.
- iii. Public blasphemy. Irreverent scorning of things holy and sacred and mocking of that which is of God and His Word.
- iv. Simony. Attempt to gain an office in the church or to sell an office for money.
- v. Faithless desertion of office. Forsaking and refusing to perform the duties of the office to which one is called.
- vi. Intrusion upon (the office) of another. Attempting to labour in the office without a proper call or to labour in the congregation where God has called others.
- vii. Perjury. Lying under oath either in the civil courts, in relation to one’s neighbour, or in the church of Christ.
- viii. Adultery. Violation of the marriage ordinances of Scripture.
- ix. Fornication. Any sexual uncleanness.
- x. Theft. Appropriating that which belongs to another.

- xi. Acts of violence. Any kind of action by physical strength or mere brute force.
- xii. Habitual drunkenness. Repeated drinking in excess.
- xiii. Brawling. Quarrelling, fighting, etc.
- xiv. Filthy lucre. Dishonest gain and pursuit of dishonest gain. (cf. Van Oene, 1990: 323-331; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79-70 *Church Order of Dordt*; see Addendum 3).

Suspension of offices entails according to Hanko the following: Office-bearers hold special offices in which they exercise the authority of Christ. A gross sin makes them unworthy to labour on behalf of Christ in the church. They must be suspended in office in an official way. Due to the sacredness of the office which they hold and the importance of the offices in the church, unfaithful office-bearers cannot continue in these offices. Suspension means a temporary barring from active functioning in the office. An office-bearer cannot, under suspension, perform the duties of his office in any respect (cf. Van Oene, 1990:331; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt 1619*).

If an office bearer makes him/herself unworthy of the office, he/she must be immediately suspended. This does not mean that sinning office-bearers must be suspended even before proper investigation is carried out. Suspension must have the approval of the nearest consistory. No consistory may act alone. The procedure to be followed is:

- a) The consistory responsible makes a decision to suspend dependent upon the approval of the nearest consistory.
- b) That consistory is notified and meets with the consistory in charge. The whole case must be discussed, so that the consistory called in is thoroughly acquainted with the case and can make an intelligent decision.
- c) The consistory called in then meets separately and comes to its decision.
- d) If there is disagreement which cannot be resolved, the matter must go to classis.
- e) If the suspension is approved, an announcement is made to that effect to the congregation (cf. Van Oene, 1990:323-331; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt, 1619* see Addendum 3t).

If an office-bearer is deposed, this can be done only with the approval of the nearest consistory. When an office-bearer is deposed from office, he/she holds that office no longer. Before a consistory can finally depose an officer the matter must go to classis. If the office-bearer does not repent, suspension and/or deposition must be followed by regular censure proceedings. Emeriti, since they continue to hold their office as ministers of the Word, are also subject to suspension and deposition.

A minister of the Word, while under suspension, is the financial responsibility of his congregation. His deposition, however, marks the end of this financial responsibility (cf. Van Oene, 1990:323-331; Hanko, 1962:131-133; Bouwman, 2000:182-185; Article 79 *Church Order of Dordt*, 1619). There are also certain principles of discipline on a practical level that ought to be established in the Church. One of them is the distinction between a charge and a specification. If there are charges without specifications, then a proper trial or investigation is impossible. If a man is accused of adultery, for example, the court must be told with whom, when and where this adultery took place. A charge without specifications is incapable of either proof or defence. Another practical principle is the distinction that is known as a distinction between administrative and judicial discipline (Vorster, 2003:129). For example, a minister of the Word may be found incompetent in the exercise of preaching; this would be an administrative offense, but it is not an offense against Christ and His Gospel. In the RCEA, in practice, all discipline is considered judicial, and even a minor administrative fault may lead to suspension from the Lord's Table.

If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly (Hanko, 1962:61). Article 31 of the *Church Order of Dordt* is one of the most fundamental principles of Reformed church polity. In the first place, it emphasizes the supreme authority of the Word of God in the life of the church. In the second place, it protects the sanctity of the individual conscience before God. Matters decided upon by majority vote are settled and binding.

As far as the terms are concerned, "majority vote" means more than half of the legally cast votes. By "settled" is meant that the matter is no longer a proper subject for discussion and debate. This does not preclude the possibility of continued discussion of the matter by individuals; but it does



mean that any agitation and propaganda against the decision is improper in the church. By “binding” is meant that it is now obligatory on the churches and the members to obey and execute the decisions. To appeal means to bring a decision from a minor assembly to a major assembly for reconsideration (Hanko, 1962:62). Being wronged does not mean necessarily being personally wronged by receiving a personal injustice, but the meaning is rather that one is wronged by a decision because it conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order. The order of appeal must always be from consistory to classis to synod. The exception to this is when a decision of the classis is appealed. Then the appellant need not go through consistory. If a person is wronged by the decision of a synod, he has one opportunity to protest the decision of synod to attempt to show the wrong of the decision (Hanko, 1962: 63).

The question arises whether the decision is binding during the time that appeal is being made. The answer is that indeed the decisions must be considered settled and binding while appeal is being made, i.e., until it has been proved to conflict with the Word of God. To assume any other position would also lead to anarchy and chaos in the church. While an appeal is being processed and treated, the matter has not yet been proved to conflict with God’s Word and must be assumed to express the truth of God’s Word. However, an ecclesiastical assembly can withhold execution of a decision as long as an appeal is pending (Hanko, 1962:63).

## **Conclusion**

In 1963, the name ‘Reformed Church of East Africa’ came into being. Other than that, the power remained in the hands of missionaries who controlled the policy-making process for example the Missionary Conference of 1963 to 1972 and the Joint Committee of 1972 to 1979. One of the reformed/Presbyterian church judicial principles is that each local congregation is *ecclesia completa* (the complete autonomy of the local church). There is no *pars completa* (churches that are partly dependent on another church for their governance). For a large part of the history of the RCEA, the denomination was dependent on structures outside the denomination to govern the denomination for example missionaries of the DRC, the Reformed Missions League. More or less the same happened to the Dutch reformed mission churches in South (see Modise 2013).

Rev. Eybers introduced an adapted form of Reformed Church governance to the Reformed church in Kenya. After the transferal of the mission station tot the Reformed Mission League, the adoption of a constitution and constitution of the RCEA as an autonomous reformed church in Kenya did not necessarily led to the reformed church judicial development of the RCEA. The executive powers of the RCEA rather reside in the missionaries of the Reformed Mission League.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TOWARDS A REFORMED CHURCH ORDER

#### 6.1. Introduction

The RCEA is currently busy with a revision of the *Constitution*. The aim of this revision is: To make people understand the *Constitution of the RCEA* and to clear ambiguity in the Constitution as well as to elaborate on areas which are not clear in the current *Constitution* (*RCEA Synod Report* 1999:7). The RCEA Synod 2000 resolved to review the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* to address the power struggle between office-bearers, the question of baptism, the ordination of women, the relationship of RCEA and other churches as well as the relationship between RCEA and the state (*RCEA Synod Resolution*, 2000:21).

In Chapter 6 the researcher uses the Reformed church polity principles as well as provisions in reformed church orders, *inter alia*, *Church Order of Dordt* (1619), Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), as a lens to evaluate the *Constitution of the RCEA*. The researcher tables in this chapter amendments to the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992*, which the RCEA may take into account when they embark on the executing of the decision of the RCEA Synod of 2000 to review the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* (see Chapter 5.3).

In Chapter 2, the researcher attended to the main research question: “What is being understood under Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles? How should these principles be take into account in the drafting of the RCEA envisaged church order?” Chapter 3 focusses on the historical background of the PCEA and conveyed that the PCEA played a huge role in the RCEA’s church judicial development. Chapter 4 indicates to what an extent the *Constitution of the RCEA* is grounded in reformed church polity principles. The church judicial analysis of the *Constitution of the RCEA* in Chapter 5 reveals that RCEA embraces the Presbyterian-synodical church governance system. However, a gradual shift from the Presbyterian-synodical church governance system to a more Episcopalian and hierarchical church governance system is emerging in the RCEA. In chapter 5 the researcher indicates numerous instances where the *Constitution of the RCEA* deviates from what ordinarily will be associated with a Reformed church order and/or reformed church polity principles (Chapter 2).

The researcher uses tables in Chapter 6 in order to compare three church orders deriving from different contexts, namely the church order of the DRC, URCSA, and the Reformed Church in America and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. The *Church Order of Dordt* influenced majorly the church governance system of aforementioned churches. Reformed churches in the Africa, influenced by the mission endeavours of the DRC missionaries, ordinarily follow the structure of the *Church order of Dordt* for example:

- a) Concerning the offices,
- b) Concerning ecclesiastical assemblies,
- c) Concerning doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies ,
- d) Concerning censure and ecclesiastical admonitions (*Church Order of Dordt 1619*; see Addendum 3; *Church order of URCSA 2016*).

The RCEA refrain from doing so and rather embraced the structure utilized by the PCEA.

The rationale behind the tables in Chapter 6 is on the one side to indicate provisions being made in above-mentioned Reformed churches. In the drafting of the envisaged church order, the RCEA should take account of the provisions made in reformed church orders globally regarding the offices, the ecclesiastical assemblies, worship, sacraments and ceremonies, nature and purpose of church discipline.

The RCEA should therefore attend in drafting of the envisaged church order of the RCEA to the following:

- a) The ordination of women,
- b) The power and responsibilities of the ecclesial assemblies
- c) Provision of the Forms of Unity in the confessional basis of the RCEA and the administration of the sacraments,
- d) The necessity and nature of Christian discipline and the right to appeal.

The envisaged church order of the RCEA will affect the governance as well as practice of the denomination on congregational level (minor assemblies), especially with regard to confessional basis, the offices, discipline, the sacraments, et cetera.

This study demonstrates the development of reformed church polity in Kenya during the period 1942- 1992. The RCEA opt in 1963 to use the concept ‘constitution’ in line with the Presbyterian Church in East Africa (PCEA) in order to refer to the general ecclesiastical constitution of the newly constituted denomination. The premise of the researcher is that the RCEA as reformed church should rather in line with other denominations in the Calvinistic tradition use the concept church order instead of constitution.

## **6.2. Proposed church order for the RCEA**

### **6.2.1. The ecclesiology of the proposed church order**

In the drafting of the envisaged church order, the RCEA should take cognizance that a church order or constitution of a church is the ecclesiology of a denomination expressed in legal terms. Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23). The premise of the RCEA is that the church is a community of believers, the household of God. The members of the Church share the gifts of the Spirit. In the words of John Calvin, the church universal is a multitude gathered from all nations; it is divided and dispersed in separate places, but it agrees on the one truth of divine doctrine and bound by bond of the same religion.

The church is also that part of the of the Kingdom where those who, as a part of the organ of the Kingdom, are called to confess the Lord Jesus Christ, to be obedient to his commandments and to the mission task of talking the Gospel that was proclaimed to them into the world. The church exists to serve the ministry to God, to serve ministry to believers and to serve ministry to the world (Grudem, 1994:867). According to Hall and Hall, no order can be maintained without authority, laws and a set of officers to apply the laws and administer the form of order, which may have been, adopted (Hall and Hall, 1994:87). In order for the church to foster the common peace and maintain concord, a form of organization must be put in place (Bauwsman, 1988:217). Church order and organization are important and essential for the well-being of the church. According to Rohls as an elect communion, the church stands in relation to the whole community (Rohls, 1998:166-167; The Heidelberg Catechism Question and answer 54) the marks of what true church are identified as the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, according to the lord’s institution and the proper administration of discipline in the church. Jesus Christ is the legal representative of the church (Giles, 1995: 126). The wellness of the church and its growth entirely

depends on the association and relationship it maintains with Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and Ruler of the Church (Coertzen, 2004:91-93; Vorster, 2003:10).

In the RCEA context, the church is seen as a fellowship. This is referred to as *ushirika*.<sup>25</sup> *Ushirika* refers to the fellowship of those called out and saved by Jesus Christ. The local church reveals and promotes the reign of God in all its beauty and splendour (Vorster, 2003:8; Guthrie, 1981:419; (Kung, 1992:56). Those given the responsibility, to execute the government of Jesus Christ are to do so in the truth that they are serving on behalf of Jesus Christ. Those given the responsibility to serve the church do not exercise the authority and power of the church, but that of Jesus Christ (De Witt, 1969:69).

The government of Jesus Christ in the church is through the Word and the Spirit. This is realized in practice through the services that the church provides as He specifically gave, set for, allocated for and entrusted to it. The authority with which the church acts and conducts its exercises is connected to the fact that it is based in the living Word of God (Coertzen, 2004:101).

According to Leith the ministry and polity of the church is God's gift to the church (1977:143). Leith's premise is that church polity embodies the conviction that God is concerned about the church's organized life and wills for it to exist in particular ways, even though these ways may be diverse and impossible to define precisely. Church polity therefor has significance for theology. According to Leith, faith cannot be separated from the form through which it expresses itself. His understanding is that the form of expression also determines faith (1977:143). This is especially true of church government, discipline and worship. According to Leith, church polity is significant in maintaining the integrity of the church (1977:143). He states that the structure of the church's life contributes to its either integrity or apostasy. According to Leith, discipline is important for the right preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments (Leith, 1977:143).

As Koffeman points out that church polity and a church, order is always dependant on the ecclesiological understanding of the church, as it manifests in a certain time and certain place

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<sup>25</sup> *Ushurika* is a Swahili word that is used to refer to fellowship or coming together for a spiritual purpose. The RCEA uses this term to refer to congregations that make the entire Synod. The more precise term that is used in the RCEA is *Sharika* or *Usharika*. It either means the coming together of individuals or local churches for the purpose of worship.

within a certain community (Koffeman, 2009:11). In other words, a church order needs to be contextual. When a church order is written for a specific church in a specific context, it implies making choices based on fundamental ecclesiological insights (Koffeman, 2009:12).

### **6.2.2. The ordination of women**

The premise of the RCEA is that only male members of the RCEA are eligible to be called and ordained as ministers of the Word, professors in theology, evangelists or elders. The office of the deacon is the only office in the RCEA that is open to both males and females. The question of “ordination of women” in RCEA has generated and continues to generate conflicting opinions among various RCEA pastors, parishioners and students in theological institutions regarding equity and equality of male and female candidates for ministry. Rose Barmasai was the first female member of the RCEA who received theological training. She, like most other women, did not receive a scholarship from the Reformed Mission League to study theology whilst the later sponsored male theological students of the RCEA. Rose Barmasai was seconded by the RCEA to receive a scholarship from Reformed Mission League in order to study theology at St. Paul’s United Theological College with the provision that she will be trained for the ministry of women and not for ordained positions in the RCEA (Chebet & Cherop, 2012:175-176). Notwithstanding the above, the ordination of women is still a still a huge issue at the RCEA (Chebet & Cherop, 2012:175).

According to Chemorion, the RCEA has currently 27 women who have finished their theological training at various levels from diploma to Master’s degree and nine who are currently undergoing theological training in various institutions (2013:1). Whereas there has been no dispute on theological training for women, there is no consensus on the role of women who graduate from theological institutions. The question is, What should they do after they train for ministry of Word just like their male counter parts? The same question has been raised for over two decades in various synod sittings but a final decision has not been made. According to Dorcas Chebet<sup>26</sup> and Beatice Cherop,<sup>27</sup> although female members of the RCEA are allowed to study theology at RITT they cannot be ordained as ministers of the Word in

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<sup>26</sup> Dorcas Chebet is a lecture at the St Phillips theological college Maseno Kenya

<sup>27</sup> Beatice Cherop coordinates Bible Study at the Centre for Mission and Leadership training at the RCEA. She is teaching at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT) in Eldoret.

RCEA. Some of them are rather appointed after their internship in church departments as coordinators, as chaplains in RCEA-sponsored schools and some as lectures at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT). There are however not much vacant positions to be absorbed by women who received theological training.

During 1970, the RCEA became a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and in 1975, the in 1975 the RCEA decided to apply for membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). The RCEA attended as observers the 1976 Reformed Ecumenical Council Assembly (*Reformed Mission League Annual report* 1970:22; *Reformed Mission League Annual report* 1975:22 & 1976:27). Henceforward, the ecumenical discourse regarding the ecumenical relationship between churches, the relationship between the church and the state as well as the ordination of women affects discourses in the RCEA. In 1986, the Synod of the RCEA resolved to withdraw its membership from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), but the practice is that the RCEA to date never notified the REC of this decision (*RCEA Synod Resolution* 25/1 1/1986). The WARC and the REC merged in June 2010 in order to become the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). Already 2010 the WCRC expressed the conviction that ordination is being seen as central to the understanding of communion and that true unity cannot be realized in a context where the call of God to women to actualize their gifts in the ministry of Word and Sacrament is not recognized, furthermore the WCRC commits itself to promote the ordination of women and work toward a time when the ordination of women will be binding on communion. The RCEA as member church of the WCRC should have taken cognisance of the decision of the WCRC 2010.

The *Constitution of the RCEA* 1992 states clearly that the requirements for ordination of the minister of the Word, elders, evangelist and the professor of Theology as biologically male, or if married only monogamously in a church ceremony” (*Constitution of the RCEA*, 1992: Article 3.4.1 (d)). The 2010 General Assembly of the RCEA amended the clause in the *Constitution of the RCEA*, which stated that a minister of the Word and/or a professor of Theology must be “biologically male”. However although this church judicial restriction was removed at the RCEA Synod 2010 it did not necessarily led to women theologians of the RCEA being ordained as



ministers of the Word or appointed as professors at the RTII. Women were still excluded from the ordained position.

The call to open the pulpits for women is not only a call for change but it is also a call to responsible stewardship. “Our church can no longer afford the luxury of wasting such resources given to us by God. It is certainly time for our church to change from the old tradition of not ordaining women to a new tradition of ordaining them. However, the honorable members of the synod can only make the final decision on this subject” (Chemorion 2013:1, Chebet & Cherop, 2012:179)

The RCEA as a member church of the WCRC should take attention of the *A Declaration of Faith on Women’s Ordination* (Addendum 6) which was adopted at 2017 General Assembly of the WCRC. The *Declaration of Faith on Women’s Ordination* addresses two kinds of institutional injustice to women in the Reformed churches and calls for urgent remedial action. The first injustice is the refusal to receive women in ordained offices of the church. The second is treating ordained women as inferior to ordained men. Article 84 of the *Church Order of Dordt* states that “no church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.” This Reformed church polity principle which is stipulated in Article 3.1 of the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* should be emphasised by the RCEA in the discourse about the ordination of women.

The RCEA should also take cognisance that the General Councils of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at least since 1989 have consistently urged the churches to remedy this injustice (*Workbook General Assembly WCRC 2017:1*). The *Declaration of faith on women’s ordination* first affirms the conviction, grounded in the Bible that “God, through the Holy Spirit, calls both women and men to participate fully in all the ministries of the church.” (see Addendum 6). The WCRC furthermore decided that the WCRC Executive Committee should open a space of discernment and offer accompaniment, educational materials and guidance to member churches that do not presently ordain women. They should also develop principles and an action plan by which the pledge of *A Declaration of faith on women’s ordination* will be realized prior to the next General Council in 2024.

A Declaration of Faith: God, through the Holy Spirit, calls both women and men to participate fully in all the ministries of the church. This declaration testifies to our belief that women and men were created equally in the image of God and that they therefore should be treated with equal respect and dignity. It testifies to the profound unity of all who have been baptized. It testifies to our experience over centuries that God has been calling both women and men to ministries of spiritual leadership and granting them the gifts and graces to carry out those roles. In some of the cultural contexts in which our churches live today, this declaration goes against the prevailing ethos. Thus faithful Christians are often called to be countercultural. Theological integrity and justice require that the churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in solidarity courageously declare their commitment to assure that both women and men have equal standing to reflect their common incorporation into the body of Christ in baptism and service. The churches of the WCRC now pledge that our common practice will be to welcome into ordained ministry women who experience that call and who demonstrate the gifts necessary for leadership and service in church ministries. Their placement and any compensation will be determined on the same basis as for men”. (*A Declaration of Faith on Women’s Ordination 2017:1*)

The *Declaration* calls on the churches of WCRC to “pledge that our common practice will be to welcome into ordained ministry women who experience that call and who demonstrate the gifts necessary for leadership and service in church ministries. Their placement and any compensation must be determined on the same basis as for men.” (*A declaration of faith on women’s ordination 2017:1*).

Being church a member of the World Reformed Communion, the RCEA should, in the drafting of the envisaged church order the RCEA, take seriously account of the *Declaration of faith on women’s ordination* and the implications regarding the inclusion of women in the ordained positions of the RCEA. The researcher therefore suggests that the RCEA should approve the following overtures regarding the issue of the ordination of women at the next synod of the RCEA:

- a) The Synod of the RCEA takes note of the *Declaration of faith on women's ordination* of the WCRC General Council 2017.
- b) The Synod of the RCEA takes with gratitude note of the WCRC General Assembly 2017 decision that the WCRC Executive Committee will open a space of discernment and offer accompaniment, educational materials and guidance to member churches that do not presently ordain women.
- c) The Synod of the RCEA takes with gratitude note that the WCRC Executive Committee will develop principles and an action plan by which the pledge of *A Declaration of faith on women's ordination* will be realized prior to the next General Council in 2024. The RCEA realizes that the RCEA as member church of the WCRC should attend to the issue of ordination of women as ministers of the Word, elders and evangelists before The WCRC General Council 2024.
- d) The Synod of the RCEA realizes that affirmative decisions regarding the ordination of women will necessitated that women theologians should be eligible to be appointed as professors of Theology at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training.
- e) The Synod of the RCEA approves a resolution that gender sensitive language should be utilized in the envisaged church order of the RCEA.

### **6.2.3. The power and responsibilities of the ecclesiastical assemblies**

The *Constitution of the RCEA* makes provision for ecclesial assemblies in the local church (Article IV), the parish (Article V), formation of presbytery (Article VI), the synod (Articles VII). Currently too much power in the RCEA resides in the moderator and general secretary. According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel, major assemblies does not have with more authority than minor courts (Chapter 2.34). Other Protestant churches make ordinary provision in their church orders for four ecclesiastical assembly's namely church council, presbytery, synod and general synod. The church orders of the DRC, the URCSA, the Reformed Church in America and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands does not make provision for executive powers of the moderator and general secretary as employees of the Synod. The RCEA should take note that major assemblies do not represent a higher kind of power than is vested in the consistory or session. As Berkhof says, "The Reformed churches know of no higher kind of ecclesiastical power than that which resides in the consistory." (1949:410).

**Table 1** indicates provisions being made in the church orders of the DRC, URCSA and the PCN regarding the power and responsibilities of the ecclesial assemblies. The following remark points to the trends in this table. The above-mentioned church orders make provision for articles on the four ecclesiastical assemblies, the authority of these assemblies as well as on the Reformed Church principle namely the equity between the assemblies and offices.

## **Recommendation 2**

The researcher proposes the following amendment to the *Constitution of the RCEA*:

- a) There are four church assemblies: Local church council, parish church council, presbytery council, synod.
- b) Supervision, government and discipline in the Church are entrusted to these assemblies.
- c) These assemblies have, each according to its own nature, ecclesiastical authority conferred upon them by Christ.
- d) The authority of the presbytery, according to its nature and function, over the church council is the same as that of the Synod, according to their nature and function, over the other church structures.
- e) The church assemblies attend to affairs from an ecclesiastical perspective, in the light of the Word of God and in an ecclesiastical manner.
- f) Major assemblies deal only with matters that belong there, or matters which have been referred by minor assemblies and which could not be concluded by the minor assemblies.
- g) A major assembly can act where a church council or presbytery does not exist anymore or is unable to constitute.
- h) The resolutions of assemblies or their authorised representatives are binding, but they may be subject to appeal to a major assembly or to the authorised representative of the major assembly.

**Table 1 The power and responsibilities of the ecclesial assemblies**

DRC	URCSA	PCN
<p><b>Article 18</b> There are four church assemblies: church council, presbytery, synod and General Synod.</p> <p>Supervision, government and discipline in the Church are entrusted to these assemblies.</p> <p><b>20</b>The authority of the presbytery, according to its nature and function, over the church council is <i>the same as that of the synod</i> and General Synod, according to their nature and function, over the other church structures.</p>	<p>There are four church assemblies: church council, presbytery, synod and General Synod.</p> <p><b>33.2</b> Supervision, government and discipline in the Church are entrusted to these assemblies.</p> <p><b>34.1</b>These assemblies have, each according to its own nature, ecclesiastical authority conferred upon them by Christ.</p> <p><b>34.2</b>The authority of the presbytery, according to its nature and function, over the church council is <i>the same as that of the synod</i> and General Synod, according to their nature and function, over the other church structures.</p>	<p><i>So that one office shall not lord it over another, one office-bearer over another, or one congregation over another</i>, but so that all things shall be aimed at obedience to Christ the Head of the Church, the leadership in the church is entrusted to ecclesial assemblies.</p> <p>These assemblies are for the local congregation the church council; for the congregations belonging to a classis the classical assembly; for the Evangelical Lutheran congregations together also the Evangelical Lutheran synod; for all congregations together and hence for the entire church the general synod.</p>

#### 6.2.4. The confessional basis of the church and the administration of the sacraments

##### 6.2.4.1. Provision of Forms of Unity in confessional basis

The RCEA should take cognisance that the Reformed church governance system maintains the right and duty of the local church to unite with other similar churches on a common confessional basis, and to form a wider organization for doctrinal, judicial, and administrative purposes, with proper stipulations of mutual obligations and rights (Berkhof, 1949:405). The Church therefore has the right to frame creeds or confessions of faith, as her testimony for the truth, and her protest against error (Hodge, 1855:8). The RCEA confessional basis entails the historic confession of the faith known as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasius Creed, as containing the sum and the substance of the faith of the church. The RCEA also adopts as a subordinate and provisional standard its catechism known as the *Ketekisma* until RCEA would frame its own confession of faith (Article 2.3 of the *Constitution of the RCEA*). Ordinarily some Reformed churches inter alia DRC, URCSA, PCN and Reformed Church in America have the Forms of Unity, namely the thirty-seven articles of the *Belgic Confession* (Addendum 1), the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the five *Canons of Dordt* (Addendum 2) in their confessional basis.

The Belhar Confession was also included as part of the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC). The DRMC and a large part of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) united in 1994 to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The Belhar Confession is included in the confessional basis of the URSA. The *Confession of Belhar*<sup>28</sup> (See Addendum 4) is a twentieth-century confession, which comes from a church in Africa and from the southern hemisphere. This confession which was born in the Southern African struggle against apartheid has wide implications beyond its original context (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2006:1; Adonis 2006: 234). After a period of consultation and some minor changes to the draft confession, the Belhar Confession was officially adopted in 1986 as a fourth confession by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church – one of the churches in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in Southern Africa.<sup>29</sup> All the classical confessions originated in specific historical contexts (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2006:1). The *Heidelberg Catechism*, *Belgic Confession* (Addendum 1), the *Canons of Dordt* (see Addendum 2), *Barmen Declaration* et cetera were undisputedly occasioned by the religious and political discourse in their countries of origin. In this regard, the *Belhar Confession* is no exception. The socio political realities in apartheid South Africa had a bearing on the decisions of the DRMC Synod 1982 which met in Belhar (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2006:8).

The *Belhar Confession* is in the first instance restricted to the issues facing the Reformed churches in South Africa during apartheid. The adoption of the *Belhar Confession*, therefore, did not take place in a political vacuum. According to Smit, quoted by Plaatjies-Van Huffel (Cloete & Smit 1984; Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2006:8) one of the co-drafters of the *Belhar Confession*, the expression

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<sup>28</sup> For historical background on the Belhar Confession as well as theological themes regarding to the Confession see Adonis Johannes Cornelius, The history of Belhar. Boesak, A. 2008. *To stand where God stands: Reflections on the Confession of Belhar after 25 years*. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* Volume 34 Number 1, July 2008.1-29; Botman, Hayman Russel. 2006. Barmen to Belhar: A contemporary confessing journey. *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif*, Vol 47 (1&2), pp.240-249. Cloete, G.D. & Smit, D.J. (eds). 1984. *A moment of truth. The confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church 1982*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Kritzing, Klippien. 2010. Celebrating communal authorship: The theological declaration of the Belydende Kring (1979) and the Belhar Confession. In honour of Simon Maimela and in memory of Chris Loff. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36:209-231; Naudé, P. 2012. The Belhar Confession and Society: A comparative reading in five statements. *Acta Theologica*, p.147-161. Sun Media; Naudé, P. 2010. *Neither calendar nor clock: Perspectives on the Belhar Confession*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Plaatjies-van Huffel, M-A. 2011. Dirk Smith – An apologist for confession. In L. Hansen, N. Koopman & R. Vosloo (eds), *Living theology*. Wellington: Bybel-Media; Plaatjies-van Huffel, M.A. 2013a. The Belhar Confession: Born in the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa, guiding light today. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* Volume 39 Number 1:1-11; Plaatjies-van Huffel, M-A. 2014. The Belhar Confession in its historical context. *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* 55(1-2)308-309; Smit, D.J. 2006. Barmen and Belhar in conversation – a South African perspective. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, 47(1/2), 291-301.

<sup>29</sup> For many years, until 1994, the family of Dutch Reformed Churches<sup>29</sup> consisted of the Dutch Reformed Church (the so-called mother church or white church) the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (the so-called colored church), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (the so-called black church), and the Reformed Church in Africa (the so-called Indian church).

*status confessionis* means "that a Christian, a group of Christians, a church or a group of churches judges that a situation has arisen, a moment of truth has come, in which nothing less than the gospel itself, their most basic confession concerning the Christian gospel, is at stake, so that they feel obliged to testify and act against that situation." Apartheid constituted a *status confessionis*, which the truth of the gospel and the Reformed faith was at stake. The WARC made the following declaration: "We declare with black Reformed Christians of South Africa that apartheid (separate development) is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the word of God, a theological heresy." According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2006:16) although the *Confession of Belhar* emerged out of a specific context it provides the global north a historic opportunity to stand in solidarity with the voices of the global south. The *Confession of Belhar* is not limited to the moment and South African context. It represents a Christian view on racism and natural division. The *Confession of Belhar* calls the church to denounce all forms of racism and injustice. The three central themes of the *Confession of Belhar*, namely unity, justice, reconciliation, have deep Biblical resonance for Reformed Christians. Through the *Belhar Confession* churches across the globe discern the action of the triune God in their lives and in history, and learn resistance in the face of behaviour, that is dehumanizing (Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2006:16). The Reformed Church of East Africa accepts that it has not completed its task of confessing the faith. Changed circumstances and a better understanding of the God's Word in future may lead to the acceptance of further articles of faith, or the revision of existing articles of faith. Various churches, based on their own historical moments, embarked on decisions to adopt the Belhar Confession as part of their confessional basis. The Belhar Confession has been approved by the Calvin Protestant Church (1986), Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa in Namibia (ERCA) (1997), United Protestant United Church in Belgium (UPCB) (1998), Seattle First Christian Reformed Church (2007), The Dominican Reformed Church (2009), Reformed Church in America (RCA) (2010) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) (2016). The Christian Reformed Church in North America accepted it as an *Ecumenical Faith Declaration*. Other reformed churches like Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church unsuccessfully tried to include the *Confession of Belhar* in their confessional basis. They tried twice to include it in their confessional basis (Vosloo, 2014:74). Vosloo continues to say that the



reception by the Dutch Reformed Church has had a strong antagonism on the side of the DRC that is against the *Confession of Belhar* (Vosloo, 2014:74).

**Table 2** indicates that the DRC, URCSA and the Reformed Church in America make provision in their church orders for articles on the Forms of Unity. Provision is being made for an article on the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19, namely the thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession (see Addendum 1), the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Canons of Dordt (see Addendum 2) in the confessional basis of these denominations. Both the URCSA and the Reformed Church in America include the Belhar Confession in their confessional basis.

### Recommendations

The RCEA should consider incorporating the Forms of Unity namely, *Belgic Confession* (; see Addendum 1), the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Canons of Dordt (c.f. Addendum 2) as well as the Belhar Confession (Addendum 4) in its confessional basis. The researcher recommends that the following article should be taken up in the confessional basis of the envisaged church order of the RCEA:

1. The Reformed Church of East Africa believes in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This Church believes that the Bible is the Word of God and is the full and trustworthy (reliable) witness of this revelation. This Church accepts that at certain times and in accordance with the Word of God, creeds came into existence, which interpret and state the faith of the Church of Christ.
2. The Reformed Church of East Africa accepts the ecumenical creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene and Athanasius Creeds, and by virtue of its own origins believes that the Confession Belgica (Netherlands Confession of Faith), the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, as handed down in history, as well as the Confession of Belhar (1986), give pure expression to its faith.



**Table 2 Provision of the Forms of Unity in the confessional basis**

DRC	URCSA	Reformed Church in America
<p>The Dutch Reformed Church is based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. The doctrine, which the Church confesses in agreement with the Word of God, is expressed in the Forms of Unity as formulated at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19, namely the thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Canons of Dordt (Article 1).</p>	<p>The URCSA believes in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This Church believes that the Bible is the Word of God and is the full and trustworthy (reliable) witness of this revelation. This Church accepts that at certain times and in accordance with the Word of God, creeds came into existence, which interpret and state the faith of the Church of Christ. The URCSA accepts the ecumenical creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and by virtue of its own origins believes that the Confession Belgica (Netherlands Confession of Faith), the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, as handed down in history, give pure expression to its faith. It furthermore accepts the Confession of Belhar (1986), as demanded of the church in the Southern African situation. The URCSA accepts that it has not completed its task of confessing the faith. Changed circumstances and a better understanding of the God's Word in future may lead to the acceptance of further articles of faith, or the revision of existing articles of faith. (Article 1).</p>	<p>The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice in the Reformed Church in America. Its Constitution consists of the Doctrinal Standards (which are the <i>Belgic Confession</i> of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism with its Compendium, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and the Belhar Confession), the Liturgy with the Directory for Worship, the Government of the Reformed Church in America, the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures, this Preamble, and the Formularies. ..The three doctrinal statements named above, together with the Belhar Confession, are the Standards of the Reformed Church in America.</p>

#### **6.2.4.2. The administration of the sacraments**

The marks of the true church are identified as the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, according to the Lord's institution and the proper administration of discipline in the church. The *Belgic Confession*, Article 30 reads as follows in this regard: "We believe that the true church must be governed by that spiritual polity which our Lord had taught

us in His Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer sacraments; The *Constitution of the RCEA* has very little to say about the use and application of sacraments. The *Constitution* only indicates that one of the important tasks of a minister of the Word is to administer the sacrament and ceremonies. **Table 3** indicates that the DRC, the URCSA and the PCN are making ample provisions in their church orders for articles on the administration of the sacraments namely Baptism and Eucharist. These article indicate *how* the sacraments should be administered, *by whom*, *where* and *who are eligible* to receive the sacraments.

### **Recommendation**

The researcher recommends that the envisioned church order of the RCEA should have an article fully dedicating to addressing the matter on sacraments in the RCEA as follows:

The congregation shall assemble publicly as a community to meet with God and one another to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to pray, to sing and to bring offerings, as determined by each congregation.

### **Baptism**

1. A minister of the Word using water and an approved liturgical form administers the holy baptism.
2. Persons older than sixteen years who are not baptised may be baptised after public profession of their faith.
3. The baptism of someone from another denomination is recognized if it was administered in the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; water was used; and was administered by a person with the required competence within that denomination.

### **Holy Communion**

The Lord's Supper is celebrated by the congregation and administered by a minister of the Word with the use of one of the forms from the church's worship book.

The following are admitted to Holy Communion:

1. Professing members of the congregation
2. Visitors from other churches
3. Holy Communion is celebrated at least four times a year in each congregation

**Table 3 Provision of the administration of the sacraments**

DRC	URCSA	PCN
<p><b>Sacraments</b>  <b>49.1 Baptism</b>  Holy baptism is administered by a minister of the Word using water and an approved liturgical form. Except in highly exceptional circumstances, this is done during the official public meeting of the congregation.</p> <p>Persons older than sixteen who are not baptised may be baptised after public profession of their faith. The baptism of someone from another denomination is recognized if it was administered in the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; water was used; and was administered by a person with the required competence within that denomination. (cf. Functional Decision baptism 2007).</p> <p><b>49.2 Communion</b>  Holy Communion is celebrated at least four times a year in each congregation, The following are admitted to holy communion: professing members of the congregation; baptismal members of the congregation who have been admitted to holy communion by the church council ; visitors from other Dutch Reformed congregations; visitors from other churches</p>	<p><b>Sacraments</b>  The congregation shall assemble publicly as a community to meet with God and one another to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to pray, to sing and to bring offerings, as determined by each congregation.</p> <p><b>Baptism</b>  45.1 Holy baptism is administered by a minister of the Word using water and an approved liturgical form. Persons older than sixteen who are not baptised may be baptised after public profession of their faith. The baptism of someone from another denomination is recognized if it was administered in the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; water was used; and was administered by a person with the required competence within that denomination.</p> <p><b>45.2 Communion</b>  The following are admitted to holy communion: professing members of the congregation; visitors from other churches  Holy Communion is celebrated at least four times a year in each congregation</p>	<p><b>Holy baptism</b>  <b>Article VIII</b> Holy baptism is administered in the midst of the congregation by a minister with the use of one of the forms from the church's worship book.</p> <p>Baptism is administered to those for whom or by whom baptism is desired after profession of faith has been made by and with the congregation.</p> <p>Baptism is administered under the responsibility of the church council, with due respect for the guidelines laid down by the church.</p> <p><b>The Lord's Supper</b>  <b>Article IX</b> The Lord's Supper is celebrated by the congregation and administered by a minister with the use of one of the forms from the church's worship book. To the Lord's Supper are invited those who confess Jesus Christ and assent to His praise and who have been introduced into this mystery by instruction in faith.</p> <p>The church council determines after consultation in the congregation in what way the members are prepared for participation in the Lord's Supper and whether the members can participate in the Lord's Supper only after public profession of faith.</p> <p>The Lord's Supper is celebrated under the responsibility of the church council, with due respect for the guidelines laid down by the church.</p>

### 6.3. The necessity and nature of Christian discipline and the right to appeal

To exercise discipline is another fundamental principle of Reformed church polity (c.f. Chapter 2.3.5 and Chapter 2.3.6; c.f. Chapter 2.3.7). Discipline entails the exercise of authority by the church over its members, officers and judicatories. Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general, to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices, which tend to the injury of the peace, purity or progress of the Church. An appeal refers in a Presbyterian/Reformed church governance system to the removal of a cause, already decided, from a minor assembly to a major assembly.

Article X of the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* entails stipulations regarding discipline and appeals with regard to the members, elders and deacons, ministers of the Word, departmental heads, church employees as well as office-bearers. The *Church Order of Dordt* (1619) the church order of the DRC, URCSA, PCN, RCA et cetera entails numerous stipulations regarding the nature of discipline inter alia the nature of discipline, mutual responsibility, consistory involvement, repentance, discipline in respect of communicant members, announcement during the procedure, re-admission, suspension and deposition of office-bearers, serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers, Christian censure, discipline in respect of non-communicant members (*Church Order of Dordt* 1619 Article 72-82). The RCEA should acquaint themselves with the principles undergirding the discipline executed by churches as well as the stipulations regarding discipline in reformed church orders and amend their constitution accordingly. The RCEA should also take note that protestant church orders ordinarily do not make provision for the discipline of departmental heads as well as church employers.

**Table 4 indicates** the provisions in the church orders of the DRC, the URCSA and the Reformed Church in America regarding the necessity and nature of Christian discipline, steps of discipline and the different procedures utilized by these denominations regarding the discipline of church members, office-bearers, deacons, elders, ministers of the Word and professors of Theology) as well the discipline of church councils regarding misconduct. The DRC makes provision in their church order for the discipline of the employees of the DRC. In the other denominations, the discipline of the employees is being dealt with as a labour issue and not as a church judicial issue. Provision is also being made in the above-mentioned church orders with regard to the discipline

of ministers in service of the denomination for example professors and lectures of theology. Charges concerning doctrine must first be considered by the General Synod before disciplinary actions can be implemented by the consistories.

### **Discipline of a member**

Membership in congregations of Protestant Churches includes ‘confessing’ members, ‘baptized’ members, and ‘inactive’ members. All members of a local church are under its care and are subject to its government and discipline, as administered by its board of elders. The board of elders may suspend from the privileges of membership in the church a member who persistently rejects its admonitions or rebukes (see *DRC Church Order*, *URCSA Church Order*). Baptized members are members who have received Christian baptism, who may or may not participate at the Lord’s Table, and who have not been received by the board of elders as confessing members (*RCA Church Order* 2011:3). The DRC and the URCSA indicate in their church orders that all baptismal and professing members of the congregation fall under the supervision and discipline of the church council. Discipline regarding baptismal members includes amongst other a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body. Censure comprises of the withholding of the refusal of the public confession of faith; The RCEA should take note that when considering admonition and discipline of people who have not made public profession of their faith, a distinction should be made between children and adults and, in the latter case, between those who are antagonistic and those who are negligent. In ministering to them, a Church Council shall follow the guidelines laid down by Synod and, if necessary, use the formulary drawn up for this purpose. (see *DRC Church Order*, *URCSA Church Order*). The PCEA should work with the premise that all members of a local church are under its care and are subject to its government and discipline, as administered by its board of elders. Ordinarily confirmed members should be a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;. Censure of confessing members comprise of the withholding of the sacraments and the suspension of other privileges of membership (see *DRC Church Order*, *URCSA Church Order*).

Excommunication from the congregation by means of the relevant form, if censure and continued pastoral care have not led to repentance. If a member fails to show marks of repentance after suspension, the board of elders may, with permission of the classis, proceed to excommunication.

The board of elders shall publicly notify the congregation of its intention to excommunicate, and later, of its final action. When confessing members, after being admonished for deviating from healthy doctrine or faithful Christian practice, show sufficient evidence of remorse and repentance, the Church Council shall do what is necessary to achieve reconciliation (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*). The Church Council will decide how the reconciliation should be effected and whether the members who were admonished due to the offence they caused in the congregation will be asked to abstain from the sacraments for a particular period. Only in exceptional cases will the reconciliation be effected through a public confession of sin in a worship service. When confessing members resolutely refuse to confess their sins and turn away from them, the Church Council shall deny them participation in the Lord's Supper until they have shown sufficient evidence of remorse and repentance (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*).

### **Disciple of Church Council members and ministers of the Word**

Ordinarily Protestant Church Orders indicates that elders, deacons, ministers of the Word, retired ministers of the Word, and candidates for the ministry, fall under the supervision and correction of the presbytery, without excluding the supervision of the church council over its office-bearers. of disobedience to the classis, A presbytery has therefore the authority, after trial, to suspend a office bearer accused of unfaithfulness to duty, or of violation of the laws and regulations of the denomination. The admonition and discipline of office bearers is specifically concerned with the doctrine, way of life and exercise of the office entrusted to them (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*). This form of admonition and discipline is exercised by the Presbytery, but office bearers are also subject to the admonition and discipline of the church council, with the understanding that the Church Council may only proceed to implementing such discipline after the Presbytery has suspended someone from his/her office. The disciplinary measure of suspension or dismissal of elders and deacons will be undertaken by the Presbytery only after thorough investigation and sufficient evidence of guilt. Church council members are reprimand within the meeting of the investigating body; suspension with or without withholding of the sacraments and the suspension of members' privileges until there is evidence of true repentance. Church council members may be dismiss from office with suspension of members' privileges and withholding of the sacraments (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*).

The RCEA should also take cognisance that if the presbytery or its authorized representative as investigative body/broader church structure as employer are convinced of the sincerity of repentance, suspension can be lifted. Elders and deacons who were dismissed can then be elected to the church council again. When a Church Council is guilty of misgovernment and a section of the Church Council or the congregation turns to the Presbytery for help, the Presbytery may take the disciplinary measures of suspension or dismissal – if it has found evidence of guilt – on condition that the Church Council was approached on the matter and had the opportunity to defend itself. If a church council is suspended, all of its members shall be disqualified for re-election until the presbytery has removed the disqualification. The presbytery shall fulfil in this instance the responsibilities of the church council so suspended until a new consistory has been constituted (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*).

If the investigating body is not convinced of the sincerity of the repentance, the suspension can be extended. The disciplinary measure of unfrocking a minister of the Word is undertaken by the synod in response to the submission and recommendation of a Presbytery. An appeal against a disciplinary measure that includes unfrocking may only be heard by the synod. The church council has the right to close the pulpit to a minister who has been accused of any notorious or scandalous offense, which would render appearance in the pulpit inappropriate. The presbytery has exclusive jurisdiction in the case of a charge against a minister of the Word. If the charge is proven, the minister may be suspended or deposed from office, suspended from the privileges of membership in the church, and/or excommunicated (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*).

### **Discipline of employee of the congregation or the denomination**

Provision is being made in Protestant Church Orders regarding the discipline of employee of the congregation or the denomination. Employees in the service of the denomination fall under the church discipline of the employer. Members of the church who are employed by the congregation or the denomination can be corrected for misconduct (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*). Employees serving the congregation or denomination can be disciplined by the church in terms of their contract of employment. Church disciplinary action is the result of violations at work and has to do with the terms of the contract of employment. Ministers of the Word who



exercise another calling with retention of their ministerial status, theological lecturers, candidate ministers and emeriti are subject to the admonition and discipline of the Presbytery in whose area they live and of the Church Council of the congregation where they are members. In the case of charges against a minister who is also installed as a professor, charges concerning doctrine must first be considered by the synod. The decision of the synod on jurisdiction is final. Once the synod has completed its judicial work, any further or remaining charges are the responsibility of the presbytery. If the charge is proven, the professor of theology may be suspended or deposed. (see *DRC Church Order, URCSA Church Order*).

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommends that the RCEA include in its envisaged church order the following articles regarding discipline, appeal and the authority granted to the major assemblies with regard to misconduct:

### **Nature and purpose of discipline**

1. The purpose of admonition and discipline as practised by the church is to glorify God: by bringing back those who have gone astray; by reconciling them with the church and their neighbours; by removing the offense that their actions gave to the congregation.
2. Ecclesial admonition and discipline are exercised by church councils, Presbyteries and Synods and are aimed at preserving the purity of doctrine and life of the church's members and office-bearers.
3. The admonition and discipline exercised by the church council in no way absolves congregation members from the responsibility to care for each in brotherly-sisterly love and, if necessary, to admonish or be admonished by one another.
4. Since ecclesial admonition and discipline has a spiritual character, it must be applied in a spiritual way and office-bearers should avoid the habits of both civil litigation and worldly authority.
5. They should not see themselves as judges but as caring overseers who – in deep humility before God and with gentle love and interest – strive to bring back to the fold those who have gone astray, with no respect of persons.
6. Ecclesial admonition and discipline must be exercised strictly in accordance with the



instructions of Scripture and the articles, stipulations of the church order.

7. A distinction must be made between a single transgression and persistent sin.
8. Ecclesial discipline addresses public and persistent sins that go against the Bible and the Confessions and that were either: a) revealed as such when the caring admonition instructed by Christ in Matthew 18:15-16 was rejected, or b) was brought to the attention of the Church Council and/or Presbytery in another acceptable way.
9. Ecclesial oversight and discipline is not only concerned with transgressions that are punished by the civil authorities, but with: all kinds of misbehaviour; everything that is in conflict with the Word of God; everything that is in conflict with the Communion formulary; everything that contradicts the solemn promises made at baptism, profession of faith and the wedding ceremony; anything that can disturb the good order in the church; offences of the congregation's leaders in the course of their official duties; serious negligence and carelessness in their ministry; and power abuse and corruption.
10. No disciplinary action may be carried out unless a) it was preceded by thorough investigation, and b) the "defendant" has had sufficient opportunity to state her/his case.
11. Church bodies should do their best to find amicable ways of settling the disputes or divisions that are brought before them, keeping in mind the well-being of the congregation.

### **The admonition and discipline of office-bearers**

1. The admonition and discipline of office-bearers is specifically concerned with the doctrine, way of life and exercise of the office entrusted to them.
2. The following office-bearers are subject to this form of admonition and discipline: elders and deacons; evangelists and ministers of the Word inducted in the congregation; ministers of the Word who have a specific task in relation to all congregations; missionaries; ministers of the Word who are involved in another calling and have retained their status as ministers of the Word; candidate ministers and emeriti.
3. This form of admonition and discipline is exercised by the Presbytery, but office-bearers are also subject to the admonition and discipline of the church council as explained in the articles above, with the understanding that the church council may only proceed to implementing such discipline after the Presbytery has suspended someone from his/her office.

4. Office-bearers will be suspended or dismissed from their office when they: Contravene the commitment they made when signing the Confessional Standards; or are guilty of a transgression mentioned in article 8 above; Seriously deviate from sound doctrine or a Christian lifestyle. The decision whether dismissal should take place immediately or follow a prior suspension from office is the responsibility of the competent church body.
5. When an office-bearer wilfully resigns from office without supplying acceptable reasons to the church council and presbytery. The presbytery will voice its strong disapproval of the act and declare that his/her office has lapsed. In addition, the church council may, in accordance with, impose the required discipline, unless it finds no reason to do so.
6. When a charge is submitted against an office-bearer or serious suspicion arises against her/him, the presbytery will be free to suspend him/her for a specified time from exercising that office; such a suspension does not have the character of a disciplinary measure.
7. The presbytery will take the disciplinary measure of dismissing a minister of the Word from his /her office after a thorough investigation that found sufficient evidence of guilt.
8. The disciplinary measure of unfrocking a minister of the Word is undertaken by a regional synod in response to the submission and recommendation of a presbytery.
9. The disciplinary measure of suspension or dismissal of elders and deacons will be undertaken by the presbytery - likewise only after thorough investigation and sufficient evidence of guilt.
10. Ministers of the Word who exercise another calling with retention of their ministerial status, theological lecturers, candidate ministers and emeriti are subject to the admonition and discipline of the presbytery in whose area they live and of the church council of the congregation where they are members.

#### **Appeal against a disciplinary measure**

1. An appeal against a disciplinary measure that includes unfrocking may only be heard by a regional synod.

#### **Church Council is guilty of misgovernment**

1. When a church council is guilty of misgovernment and a section of the church council or the congregation turns to the Presbytery for help, the Presbytery may take the disciplinary measures of suspension or dismissal – if it has found evidence of guilt – on condition that the church council was approached on the matter and had the opportunity to defend itself.

**Table 4 The necessity and nature of Christian discipline**

<b>DRC</b>	<b>URCSA</b>	<b>Reformed Church in America</b>
<p><b>Nature of church discipline</b>  <b>59</b> Church supervision is done and church correction and discipline are exercised: to the glory of God; for the welfare of the Church; for the salvation of the sinner; as prescribed by the Word of God; the Confessions; The <i>Church Order</i> and other regulations<sup>26</sup> of the Church. The employment contract.</p> <p><b>60</b> Supervision and correction have a spiritual character, which is fitting for the church as a fellowship based on faith and love. Supervision and correction are therefore conducted in an ecclesiastical manner and by spiritual means; Church supervision covers the whole spectrum of life (profession and conduct) of all the members (baptismal and professing) of the congregation, including office-bearers.</p> <p><b>Article 61</b> Sins, which are subject to correction, are those, which contravene the Word of God and the confession of the Church. Sins that cause public offence or that come to the attention of the Church in accordance with the prescriptions of Matthew 18:15-17, expose the offender(s) to an official correctional enquiry.</p>	<p><b>Nature of church discipline</b>  <b>86</b> The purpose of admonition and discipline as practiced by the church is to glorify God: by bringing, back those who have gone astray; by reconciling them with the church and their neighbors; by removing the offense that their actions gave to the congregation. Ecclesial admonition and discipline are exercised by Church Councils, Presbyteries and Synods and are aimed at preserving the purity of doctrine and life of the church's members and office-bearers.</p> <p><b>87</b> Since ecclesial admonition-and-discipline has a spiritual character, it must be applied in a spiritual way and office-bearers should avoid the habits of both civil litigation and worldly authority. They should not see themselves as judges but as caring overseers who – in deep humility before God and with gentle love and interest – strive to bring back to the fold those who have gone astray, with no respect of persons.</p> <p>Ecclesial admonition and discipline must be exercised strictly in accordance with the instructions of Scripture and the Articles, Stipulations of the Church Order. A distinction must be made between a single transgression and persistent sin.</p>	<p><b>Nature of church discipline</b>  Discipline is the exercise of the authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to the church to promote its purity, to benefit the offender, and to vindicate the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. to promote its purity, to benefit the offender, and to vindicate the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. The exercise of discipline may take the form of admonition, rebuke, and suspension from the privileges of membership in the church or from office, deposition from office, or excommunication, as the gravity of the offense in the opinion of the assembly or the judicatory may warrant.</p> <p><b>2. Nature of Offenses</b> The only matters to be considered as offenses subject to accusation are those which can be shown to be such from the Holy Scriptures, or from the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America.<sup>2</sup> Offenses which are known at most to a very few persons shall be dealt with first in the manner indicated by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. 18:15-17. If this procedure fails, the matter shall be presented to the body to which the offender is amenable. Notorious and scandalous offenses require immediate action by the responsible body pending review by the appropriate assembly or judicatory.</p>

#### 6.4. Conclusion

Historically the RCEA considers and understands itself as a reformed church, but in praxis it deviates from principles ordinarily equates with Reformed church polity. The RCEA ignored the rich Reformed heritage with the adoption of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of East*

*Africa* during 1963. The research challenges the ecclesiology of the RCEA as well as church judicial presumptions of the *Constitution of the RCEA*. There is a link between ecclesiology and church polity. The presupposition of the researcher is that the RCEA should rather use in line with the historic church orders the concept ‘church order’ than ‘constitution’.

This dissertation contributes to the knowledge of the church judicial development of the RCEA and the consequent need to develop a new church order for the denomination. It is hoped that this study will quicken further research in church polity and will ultimately lead to the writing of a manual on the envisaged church order for the RCEA and other publications regarding the practice of church polity in the RCEA.

It is the presumption of the researcher that this research will contribute to global research in reformed church polity, because it showcases that not only the DRC of South Africa (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.1 Dependency to “mother church” 1904-1963), but likewise the Reformed Mission League of the Netherlands encumbered the church judicial development of the RCEA (see Chapter 5.2 RCEA as semi-autonomous church 1963-1991). Church historians usually underscore that also mission agencies from the global north suppressed the church judicial development of churches in the global south. The dissertation therefore makes a huge contribution in decolonization of mission history in this regard (Chapter 5).

The researcher pays extensively attention to the Reformed/Presbyterian church polity principles in Chapter 2, namely

- a) Self-government under the sole headship of Christ,
- b) The limited autonomy of the local congregation,
- c) The denominational ties serve the well-being of the Church,
- d) The restricted power and responsibilities of ecclesial assemblies,
- e) The necessity and nature of Christian discipline,
- f) Right of appeal,
- g) The power of the major assemblies with regard to misconduct (Plaatjies-Van Huffel, 2014:34; Chapter 2).

The researcher indicates in Chapter 5 how these principles should be taken into account in the drafting of the RCEA envisaged church order. It is envisioned that this dissertation will be used in the training RCEA theological students, further theological training of the ministers of the Word as well as the training of evangelists, elders, deacons and members of the RCEA.

The premise of the researcher is that this research will give the members of the church as well as ministers of the Word and theologians of the RCEA for the first time the opportunity to use church judicial tools to evaluate the *Constitution of the RCEA*. This will put the RCEA in the position to amend the *Constitution of the RCEA* in an appropriately manner (see Chapter 2, 4, 5,6). The research may contribute to a better understanding of Reformed Church Polity in the RCEA and will subsequent helped with the drafting of a reformed church order for the Reformed Church of East Africa based on the research findings.

The RCEA Synod of 2000 resolved to review the *Constitution of the RCEA 1992* in order to address the power struggle between the moderator and the general secretary, the question of Baptism, the ordination of women, the relationship of RCEA and other churches and the relationship between the RCEA and the state. The researcher attended in this research to the issue of equity amongst clergy, the question of baptism and the Eucharist as well as the ordination of women in the above proposals regarding the envisaged church order of the RCEA. Two issues are still outstanding and need to pay heed to in future research namely the relationship of the RCEA and other churches as well as the relationship between the RCEA and the state.

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## **ADDENDUM 1**

### **THE BELGIC CONFESSION**

#### **ARTICLE 1—THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD**

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is only one God, who is a simple and spiritual Being; He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

#### **ARTICLE 2—HOW GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO US**

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly the invisible qualities of God namely His eternal power and deity, as the apostle Paul says in Rom 1:20. All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

#### **ARTICLE 3—THE WORD OF GOD**

We confess that this Word of God did not come by the impulse of man, but that men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God, as the apostle Peter says. Thereafter, in His special care for us and our salvation, God commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

#### **ARTICLE 4—THE CANONICAL BOOKS**

We believe that the Holy Scriptures consist of two parts, namely, the Old and the New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These books are listed in the Church of God as follows. The books of the Old Testament: the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The books of the New Testament: the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, namely, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon;



the letter to the Hebrews; the seven other letters, namely, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to the apostle John.

#### **ARTICLE 5—THE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**

We receive all these books and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith. We believe without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they contain the evidence thereof in themselves; for, even the blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.

#### **ARTICLE 6—THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL BOOKS**

We distinguish these holy books from the apocryphal, namely, 3 and 4 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, additions to Esther, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men in the Furnace, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. The Church may read and take instruction from these so far as they agree with the canonical books. They are, however, far from having such power and authority that we may confirm from their testimony any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less may they be used to detract from the authority of the holy books.

#### **ARTICLE 7—THE SUFFICIENCY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**

We believe that this Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein. The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length. It is therefore unlawful for any one, even for an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in Holy Scripture: yes, even if it be an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says. Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God, it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and lighter than a breath. We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us: Test the spirits to see whether they are of God. Likewise: If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

**ARTICLE 8—GOD IS ONE IN ESSENCE, YET DISTINGUISHED IN THREE PERSONS**

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible. The Son is the Word, the wisdom, and the image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has His personal existence, distinguished by Their properties; but in such a way that these three persons are but one only God. It is therefore evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed; for the Father has not assumed our flesh and blood, neither has the Holy Spirit, but the Son only. The Father has never been without His Son, or without His Holy Spirit. For They are all three co-eternal and co-essential. There is neither first nor last; for They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

**ARTICLE 9—SCRIPTURE PROOF OF THIS DOCTRINE**

All this we know both from the testimonies of Holy Scripture and from the respective works of the three Persons, and especially those we perceive in ourselves. The testimonies of Scripture which lead us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament. It is not necessary to mention them all; it is sufficient to select some with discretion. In the book of Genesis God says: Let Us make man in our image after our likeness .... So God created man in His own image ...; male and female He created them. Also: Behold, the man has become like one of Us. From God's saying, Let Us make man in Our image, it appears that there are more divine persons than one; and when He says, God created, He indicates that there is one God. It is true, He does not say how many persons there are, but what seems to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament. For when our Lord was baptized in the river Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, who said, This is My beloved Son; the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form as a dove. For the baptism of all believers Christ prescribed this formula: Baptize all nations into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the gospel according to Luke the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. Likewise: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In all these places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence. Although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless in this life we believe it on the ground of the Word of God, and we expect to

enjoy its perfect knowledge and fruit hereafter in heaven. Moreover, we must observe the distinct offices and works of these three Persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator by His power; the Son is our Saviour and Redeemer by His blood; the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier by His dwelling in our hearts. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity has always been maintained and preserved in the true Church since the time of the apostles to this very day, over against Jews, Muslims, and against false Christians and heretics such as Marcion, Mani, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers. In this doctrine, therefore, we willingly receive the three creeds, of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius; likewise that which in accordance with them is agreed upon by the early fathers.

#### **ARTICLE 10—JESUS CHRIST TRUE AND ETERNAL GOD**

We believe that Jesus Christ according to His divine nature is the only begotten Son of God, begotten from eternity, not made, nor created—for then He would be a creature—but of the same essence with the Father, equally-eternal, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, and is equal to Him in all things. He is the Son of God, not only from the time that He assumed our nature but from all eternity, as these testimonies, when compared with each other, teach us: Moses says that God created the world; the apostle John says that all things were made by the Word which he calls God. The letter to the Hebrews says that God made the world through His Son; likewise the apostle Paul says that God created all things through Jesus Christ. Therefore it must necessarily follow that He who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ, did exist at that time when all things were created by Him. Therefore He could say, Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am, and He prayed, Glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. And so He is true, eternal God, the Almighty, whom we invoke, worship, and serve.

#### **ARTICLE 11—THE HOLY SPIRIT TRUE AND ETERNAL GOD**

We believe and confess also that the Holy Spirit from eternity proceeds from the Father and the Son. He is neither made, created, nor begotten, but He can only be said to proceed from both. In order He is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of one and the same essence, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

#### **ARTICLE 12—THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS, ESPECIALLY THE ANGELS**

We believe that the Father through the Word, that is, through His Son, has created out of nothing heaven and earth and all creatures, when it seemed good to Him, and that He has given to every creature its being, shape, and form, and to each its specific task and function to serve its Creator. We believe that He also

continues to sustain and govern them according to His eternal providence and by His infinite power in order to serve man, to the end that man may serve his God. He also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect. Some of these have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition, but the others have by the grace of God remained steadfast and continued in their first state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and of all that is good. With all their might, they lie in wait like murderers to ruin the Church and all its members and to destroy everything by their wicked devices. They are therefore by their own wickedness sentenced to eternal damnation and daily expect their horrible torments. Therefore we detest and reject the error of the Sadducees, who deny that there are any spirits and angels; and also the error of the Manichees, who say that the devils were not created, but have their origin of themselves, and that without having become corrupted, they are wicked by their own nature.

#### **ARTICLE 13—THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD**

We believe that this good God, after He had created all things, did not abandon them or give them up to fortune or chance, but that according to His holy will He so rules and governs them that in this world nothing happens without His direction. Yet God is not the Author of the sins which are committed nor can He be charged with them. For His power and goodness are so great and beyond understanding that He ordains and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even when devils and wicked men act unjustly. And as to His actions surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire farther than our capacity allows us. But with the greatest humility and reverence we adore the just judgments of God, which are hidden from us, and we content ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, who have only to learn those things which He teaches us in His Word, without transgressing these limits. This doctrine gives us unspeakable consolation, for we learn thereby that nothing can happen to us by chance, but only by the direction of our gracious heavenly Father. He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures so under His power that not one hair of our head—for they are all numbered—nor one sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father. In this we trust, because we know that He holds in check the devil and all our enemies so that they cannot hurt us without His permission and will. We therefore reject the damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God does not concern Himself with anything but leaves all things to chance.

#### **ARTICLE 14—THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN AND HIS INCAPABILITY OF DOING WHAT IS TRULY GOOD**

We believe that God created man of dust from the ground and He made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy. His will could conform to the will of God in every respect.

But, when man was in this high position, he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He gave ear to the words of the devil and wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse. For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death. Since man became wicked and perverse, corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts which he had once received from God. He has nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man inexcusable. For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness, as Scripture teaches us, The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it; where the apostle John calls mankind darkness. Therefore we reject all teaching contrary to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin and no one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. For who dares to boast that he of himself can do any good, when Christ says: No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him? Who will glory in his own will, when he understands that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God? In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realizes that we are not competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but that our competence is from God? Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm: God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. For there is no understanding nor will conformable to the understanding and will of God unless Christ has brought it about; as He teaches us: Apart from Me you can do nothing.

**ARTICLE 15—ORIGINAL SIN** We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race. It is a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb. As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin. It is, therefore, so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn the human race. It is not abolished nor eradicated even by baptism, for sin continually streams forth like water welling up from this woeful source. Yet, in spite of all this, original sin is not imputed to the children of God to their condemnation but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them. This does not mean that the believers may sleep peacefully in their sin, but that the awareness of this corruption may make them often groan as they eagerly wait to be delivered from this body of death. In this regard we reject the error of the Pelagians, who say that this sin is only a matter of imitation.

#### **ARTICLE 16—DIVINE ELECTION**

We believe that, when the entire offspring of Adam plunged into perdition and ruin by the transgression of the first man, God manifested Himself to be as He is: merciful and just. Merciful, in rescuing and saving from this perdition those whom in His eternal and unchangeable counsel He has elected in Jesus Christ our

Lord by His pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. Just, in leaving the others in the fall and perdition into which they have plunged themselves.

#### **ARTICLE 17—THE RESCUE OF FALLEN MAN**

We believe that, when He saw that man had thus plunged himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself completely miserable, our gracious God in His marvellous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man when he trembling fled from Him. He comforted him with the promise that He would give him His Son, born of woman, to bruise the head of the serpent and to make man blessed.

#### **ARTICLE 18—THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD**

We confess, therefore, that God has fulfilled the promise He made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets when, at the time appointed by Him, He sent into the world His own only-begotten and eternal son, who took the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities, without sin, for He was conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by the act of a man. He not only assumed human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, in order that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should assume both to save both. Contrary to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother, we therefore confess that Christ partook of the flesh and blood of the children. He is a fruit of the loins of David; born of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary; born of woman; a branch of David; a shoot from the stump of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since the Son was concerned with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, yet without sin. In this way He is in truth our Immanuel, that is, God with us.

#### **ARTICLE 19—THE TWO NATURES IN THE ONE PERSON OF CHRIST**

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature, so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each nature retains its own distinct properties: His divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth. His human nature has not lost its properties; it has beginning of days and remains created. It is finite and retains all the properties of a true body. Even though, by His resurrection, He has given immortality to His human nature, He has not changed its reality, since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body. However, these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by His death. Therefore, what

He, when dying, committed into the hands of His Father was a real human spirit that departed from His body. Meanwhile His divinity always remained united with His human nature, even when He was lying in the grave. And the divine nature always remained in Him just as it was in Him when He was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while. For this reason we profess Him to be true God and true man: true God in order to conquer death by His power; and true man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.

#### **ARTICLE 20—THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST**

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which disobedience had been committed, to make satisfaction in that same nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death. God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquity on Him, and poured out His goodness and mercy on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation. Out of a most perfect love He gave His Son to die for us and He raised Him for our justification that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

#### **ARTICLE 21—THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST**

We believe that Jesus Christ was confirmed by an oath to be a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. He presented Himself in our place before His Father, appeasing God's wrath by His full satisfaction, offering Himself on the tree of the cross, where He poured out His precious blood to purge away our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written, Upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole and with His stripes we are healed. Like a lamb He was led to the slaughter. He was numbered with the transgressors, and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though he had first declared Him innocent. He restored what He had not stolen. He died as the righteous for the unrighteous. He suffered in body and soul, feeling the horrible punishment caused by our sins, and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. Finally, He exclaimed, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? All this He endured for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore we justly say, with Paul, that we know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus our Lord. We find comfort in His wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means of reconciliation with God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which the believers are perfected for all times. This is also the reason why the angel of God called Him Jesus, that is, Saviour, because He would save His people from their sins.



**ARTICLE 22—OUR JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST**

We believe that, in order that we may obtain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith. This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes Him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him. For it must necessarily follow, either that all we need for our salvation is not in Jesus Christ or, if it is all in Him, that one who has Jesus Christ through faith, has complete salvation. It is, therefore, a terrible blasphemy to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something else is needed besides Him; for the conclusion would then be that Christ is only half a Saviour. Therefore we rightly say with Paul that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works of law. Meanwhile, strictly speaking, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us, for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ our righteousness; He imputes to us all His merits and as many holy works as He has done for us and in our place. Therefore Jesus Christ is our righteousness, and faith is the instrument that keeps us with Him in the communion of all His benefits. When those benefits have become ours, they are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

**ARTICLE 23—OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD**

We believe that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake and that there our righteousness before God consists, as David and teach us. They pronounce a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works. The apostle also says that we are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Therefore we always hold to this firm foundation. We give all the glory to God, humble ourselves before Him, and acknowledge ourselves to be what we are. We do not claim anything for ourselves or our merits, but rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified; His obedience is ours when we believe in Him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence in drawing near to God, freeing our conscience of fear, terror, and dread, so that we do not follow the example of our first father, Adam, who trembling tried to hide and covered himself with fig leaves. For indeed, if we had to appear before God, relying—be it ever so little—on ourselves or some other creature, (woe be to us!) we would be consumed. Therefore everyone must say with David, O LORD, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for no man living is righteous before Thee.

**ARTICLE 24—MAN'S SANCTIFICATION AND GOOD WORKS**

We believe that this true faith, worked in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man. It makes him live a new life and frees him from the slavery of sin. Therefore it is not true that this justifying faith makes man indifferent to living a good and holy life. On the contrary, without it no one would ever do anything out of love for God, but only out of self-love or fear of being condemned. It is therefore impossible for this holy faith to be inactive in man,



for we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls faith working through love. This faith induces man to apply himself to those works which God has commanded in His Word. These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, since they are all sanctified by His grace. Nevertheless, they do not count toward our justification. For through faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do any good works. Otherwise they could not be good any more than the fruit of a tree can be good unless the tree itself is good. Therefore we do good works, but not for merit. For what could we merit? We are indebted to God, rather than He to us, for the good works we do, since it is He who is at work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Let us keep in mind what is written: So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.” Meanwhile we do not deny that God rewards good works, but it is by His grace that He crowns His gifts. Furthermore, although we do good works, we do not base our salvation on them. We cannot do a single work that is not defiled by our flesh and does not deserve punishment. Even if we could show one good work, the remembrance of one sin is enough to make God reject it. We would then always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be constantly tormented, if they did not rely on the merit of the death and passion of our Saviour.

#### **ARTICLE 25—CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW**

We believe that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and that all shadows have been fulfilled, so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians. Yet their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have been fulfilled. In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken from the law and the prophets, both to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel and to order our life in all honour, according to God’s will and to His glory.

#### **ARTICLE 26—CHRIST’S INTERCESSION**

We believe that we have no access to God except through the only Mediator and Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous. For this purpose He became man, uniting together the divine and human nature, that we men might not be barred from but have access to the divine majesty. This Mediator, however, whom the Father has ordained between Himself and us, should not frighten us by His greatness, so that we look for another according to our fancy. There is no creature in heaven or on earth who loves us more than Jesus Christ. Though He was in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of man and of a servant for us, and was made like His brethren in every respect. If, therefore, we had to look for another intercessor, could we find one who loves us more than He who laid down His life for us, even while we were His enemies? If we had to look for one who has authority and power, who has more than He who is seated at the right hand

of the Father and who has all authority in heaven and on earth? Moreover, who will be heard more readily than God's own well-beloved Son?

Therefore it was pure lack of trust which introduced the custom of dishonouring the saints rather than honouring them, doing what they themselves never did nor required. On the contrary, they constantly rejected such honour according to their duty, as appears from their writings. Here one ought not to bring in our unworthiness, for it is not a question of offering our prayers on the basis of our own worthiness, but only on the basis of the excellence and worthiness of Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is ours by faith. Therefore with good reason, to take away from us this foolish fear or rather distrust, the author of Hebrews says to us that Jesus Christ was made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted. Further, to encourage us more to go to Him, he says: Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The same letter says: Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, etc. Also, Christ holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. What more is needed? Christ Himself says: I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me. Why should we look for another advocate? It has pleased God to give us His Son as our Advocate. Let us then not leave Him for another, or even look for another, without ever finding one. For when God gave Him to us, He knew very well that we were sinners. In conclusion, according to the command of Christ, we call upon the heavenly Father through Christ our only Mediator, as we are taught in the Lord's prayer. We rest assured that we shall obtain all we ask of the Father in His Name.

## **ARTICLE 27—THE CATHOLIC OR UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. This Church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects. This holy Church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world, although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man. Thus during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord kept for Himself seven thousand persons

who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Moreover, this holy Church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

#### **ARTICLE 28—EVERYONE’S DUTY TO JOIN THE CHURCH**

We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it, that no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, no matter what his state or quality may be. But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the Church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline, bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters, according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body. To observe this more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the Church and to join this assembly wherever God has established it. They should do so even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow. All therefore who draw away from the Church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God.

#### **ARTICLE 29—THE MARKS OF THE TRUE AND THE FALSE CHURCH**

We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what is the true Church, for all sects which are in the world today claim for themselves the name of Church. We are not speaking here of the hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church along with the good and yet are not part of the Church, although they are outwardly in it. We are speaking of the body and the communion of the true Church which must be distinguished from all sects that call themselves the Church. The true Church is to be recognized by the following marks: It practises the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises Church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. Hereby the true Church can certainly be known and no one has the right to separate from it. Those who are of the Church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life. They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him. The false church assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God. It does not want to submit itself to the yoke of Christ. It does not administer the sacraments as Christ commanded in His Word, but adds to them and subtracts from them as

it pleases. It bases itself more on men than on Jesus Christ. It persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuke the false church for its sins, greed, and idolatries. These two Churches are easily recognized and distinguished from each other.

#### **ARTICLE 30—THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH**

We believe that this true Church must be governed according to the Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word. There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church. By these means they preserve the true religion; they see to it that the true doctrine takes its course, that evil men are disciplined in a spiritual way and are restrained, and also that the poor and all the afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need. By these means everything will be done well and in good order when faithful men are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.

#### **ARTICLE 31—THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

We believe that ministers of God's Word, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by lawful election of the Church, with prayer and in good order, as stipulated by the Word of God. Therefore everyone shall take care not to intrude by improper means. He shall wait for the time that he is called by God so that he may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord. Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church. In order that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or rejected, we declare that everyone must hold the ministers of the Word and the elders of the Church in special esteem because of their work, and as much as possible be at peace with them without grumbling or arguing.

#### **ARTICLE 32—THE ORDER AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH**

We believe that, although it is useful and good for those who govern the Church to establish a certain order to maintain the body of the Church, they must at all times watch that they do not deviate from what Christ, our only Master, has commanded. Therefore we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way. We accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God. To that end, discipline and excommunication ought to be exercised in agreement with the Word of God.

**ARTICLE 33—THE SACRAMENTS**

We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our insensitivity and infirmity, has ordained sacraments to seal His promises to us and to be pledges of His good will and grace towards us. He did so to nourish and sustain our faith. He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what He declares to us in His Word and what He does inwardly in our hearts. Thus He confirms to us the salvation which He imparts to us. Sacraments are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the signs are not void and meaningless so that they deceive us. For Jesus Christ is their truth; apart from Him they would be nothing. Moreover, we are satisfied with the number of sacraments which Christ our Master has instituted for us, namely, two: the sacrament of baptism and the holy supper of Jesus Christ.

**ARTICLE 34—THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, has by His shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as an expiation or satisfaction for sins. He has abolished circumcision, which involved blood, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism. By baptism we are received into the Church of God and set apart from all other peoples and false religions, to be entirely committed to Him whose mark and emblem we bear. This serves as a testimony to us that He will be our God and gracious Father for ever. For that reason He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with plain water, into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. By this He signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul. It washes and cleanses our soul from sin and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God. This is not brought about by the water as such but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, which is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Thus the ministers on their part give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives us what is signified by the sacrament, namely, the invisible gifts and grace. He washes, purges, and cleanses our souls of all filth and unrighteousness, renews our hearts and fills them with all comfort, gives us true assurance of His fatherly goodness, clothes us with the new nature, and takes away the old nature with all its works. We believe, therefore, that anyone who aspires to eternal life ought to be baptized only once. Baptism should never be repeated, for we cannot be born twice. Moreover, baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us and when we receive it, but throughout our whole life. For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism received only once, and who also condemn the baptism of the little children of believers. We believe that these children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were

circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children. Indeed, Christ shed His blood to wash the children of believers just as much as He shed it for adults. Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, as the Lord commanded in the law that a lamb was to be offered shortly after children were born. This was a sacrament of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Because baptism has the same meaning for our children as circumcision had for the people of Israel, Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.

#### **ARTICLE 35—THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER**

We believe and confess that our Saviour Jesus Christ has instituted the sacrament of the holy supper to nourish and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church. Those who are born anew have a twofold life. One is physical and temporal, which they received in their first birth and it is common to all men. The other is spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth and is effected by the word of the gospel in the communion of the body of Christ. This life is not common to all but only to the elect of God. For the support of the physical and earthly life God has ordained earthly and material bread. This bread is common to all just as life is common to all. For the support of the spiritual and heavenly life, which believers have, He has sent them a living bread which came down from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of the believers when He is eaten by them, that is, spiritually appropriated and received by faith. To represent to us the spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body and wine as a sacrament of His blood. He testifies to us that as certainly as we take and hold the sacrament in our hands and eat and drink it with our mouths, by which our physical life is then sustained, so certainly do we receive by faith, as the hand and mouth of our soul, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Saviour, in our souls for our spiritual life. It is beyond any doubt that Jesus Christ did not commend His sacraments to us in vain. Therefore He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs. We do not understand the manner in which this is done, just as we do not comprehend the hidden activity of the Spirit of God. Yet we do not go wrong when we say that what we eat and drink is the true, natural body and the true blood of Christ. However, the manner in which we eat it is not by mouth but in the spirit by faith. In that way Jesus Christ always remains seated at the right hand of God His Father in heaven; yet He does not cease to communicate Himself to us by faith. This banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ makes us partakers of Himself with all His benefits and gives us the grace to enjoy both Himself and the merit of His suffering and death. He nourishes, strengthens, and comforts our poor, desolate souls by the eating of His flesh, and refreshes and renews them by the drinking of His blood. Although the sacrament is joined together with that which is signified, the latter is not always received by all. The wicked certainly takes the sacrament to his condemnation, but he does not receive the truth of the sacrament. Thus Judas and Simon the sorcerer

both received the sacrament, but they did not receive Christ, who is signified by it. He is communicated exclusively to the believers. Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Saviour with thanksgiving and we confess our faith and Christian religion. Therefore no one should come to this table without careful self-examination, lest by eating this bread and drinking from this cup, he eat and drink judgment upon himself. In short, we are moved by the use of this holy sacrament to a fervent love of God and our neighbours. Therefore we reject as desecrations all additions and damnable inventions which men have mixed with the sacraments. We declare that we should be content with the ordinance taught by Christ and His apostles and should speak about it as they have spoken.

### **ARTICLE 36—THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

We believe that, because of the depravity of mankind, our gracious God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies, in order that the licentiousness of men be restrained and that everything be conducted among them in good order. For that purpose He has placed the sword in the hand of the government to punish wrongdoers and to protect those who do what is good. Their task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the Church and its ministry in order that<sup>1</sup> the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, and God may be honoured and served by everyone, as He requires in His Word. Moreover, everyone—no matter of what quality, condition, or rank—ought to be subject to the civil officers, pay taxes, hold them in honour and respect, and obey them in all things which do not disagree with the Word of God. We ought to pray for them, that God may direct them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. For that reason we condemn the Anabaptists and other rebellious people, and in general all those who reject the authorities and civil officers, subvert justice, introduce a communion of goods, and confound the decency that God has established among men.

### **ARTICLE 37—THE LAST JUDGMENT**

Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, that when the time, ordained by the Lord but unknown to all creatures, has come and the number of the elect is complete, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty. He will declare Himself Judge of the living and the dead and set this old world afire in order to purge it. Then all people, men, women, and children, who ever lived, from the beginning of the world to the end, will appear in person before this great Judge. They will be summoned with the archangel's call and with the sound of the trumpet of God. Those who will have died before that time will arise out of the earth, as their spirits are once again united with

their own bodies in which they lived. Those who will then be still alive will not die as the others but will be changed in the twinkling of an eye from perishable to imperishable. Then the books will be opened and the dead will be judged according to what they have done in this world, whether good or evil. Indeed, all people will render account for every careless word they utter, which the world regards as mere jest and amusement. The secrets and hypocrisies of men will then be publicly uncovered in the sight of all. And so for good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to the wicked and evildoers but it is a great joy and comfort to the righteous and elect. For then their full redemption will be completed and they will receive the fruits of their labour and of the trouble they have suffered. Their innocence will be known to all and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring upon the wicked who persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world. The wicked will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences and will become immortal, but only to be tormented in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. On the other hand, the faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honour. The Son of God will acknowledge their names before God His Father and His elect angels. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and their cause—at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil authorities—will be recognized as the cause of the Son of God. As a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as the heart of man could never conceive. Therefore we look forward to that great day with a great longing to enjoy to the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!



## **ADDENDUM 2**

### **THE CANONS OF DORDT**

#### **First Head of Doctrine**

#### **Divine Election and Reprobation**

##### **Article 1**

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle: That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God (Rom. 3:19). And: For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). And: For the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

##### **Article 2**

But in this the love of God was manifested, that He sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life (1 John 4:9; John 3:16).

##### **Article 3**

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? (Rom. 10:14, 15).

##### **Article 4**

The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Saviour by a true and living faith are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

##### **Article 5**

The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, etc. (Phil. 1:29).

**Article 6**

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18, A.V.). Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11). According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

**Article 7**

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written: Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere: Whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

**Article 8**

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and the New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace

and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein (Eph. 1:4, 5; 2:10).

#### **Article 9**

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: He hath chosen us (not because we were, but) that we should be holy, and without blemish before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

#### **Article 10**

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, etc., it was said unto her (namely, to Rebekah), The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated (Rom. 9:11-13). And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

#### **Article 11**

And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

#### **Article 12**

The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God—such as, a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

#### **Article 13**

The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before Him, for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

#### **Article 14**

As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy Name, and for enlivening and comforting His people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High (Acts 20:27; Rom. 11:33, 34; 12:3; Heb. 6:17, 18).

#### **Article 15**

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but, permitting them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at last, for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation, which by no means makes God the Author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous Judge and Avenger thereof.

#### **Article 16**

Those in whom a living faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavour after filial obedience, a glorying in God through Christ, is not as yet strongly felt, and who nevertheless make use of the means which God has appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation have they who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach

that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those who, regardless of God and of the Saviour Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

#### **Article 17**

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:14).

#### **Article 18**

To those who murmur at the free grace of election and the just severity of reprobation we answer with the apostle: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? (Rom. 9:20), and quote the language of our Saviour: Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? (Matt. 20:15). And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33-36).

#### **Rejection of Errors**

The true doctrine concerning election and reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

#### **Paragraph 1**

Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word. For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, above others, He will grant, in time, both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written: I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world (John 17:6). And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). And: Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

**Paragraph 2**

Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: That there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation.

For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: And whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

**Paragraph 3**

Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life. For by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the apostle is charged as untrue: Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal (2 Timothy 1:9).

**Paragraph 4**

Who teach: That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent. For this savours of the teaching of Pelagius, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle when he writes: Among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of

his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory (Eph. 2:3-9).

### **Paragraph 5**

Who teach: That the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur. This is repugnant to the entire Scripture, which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: Election is not of works, but of him that calls (Rom. 9:11). And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4). Ye did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16). But if it is by grace, it is no more of works (Rom. 11:6). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

### **Paragraph 6**

Who teach: That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish. By this gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture, which teaches that the elect can not be led astray (Matt. 24:24), that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him (John 6:39), and that God also glorified those whom he foreordained, called, and justified (Rom. 8:30).

### **Paragraph 7**

Who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition. For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the apostle and praise this favour of God (Eph. 1); who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with His disciples that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? (Rom. 8:33).

**Paragraph 8**

Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of His righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion. For this is firmly decreed: He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he harden (Rom. 9:18). And also this: Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight (Matt. 11:25, 26).

**Paragraph 9**

Who teach: That the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to which the gospel is not communicated.

For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: Behold, unto Jehovah thy God belongeth heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein. Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14, 15). And Christ said: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

**Second Head of Doctrine****The Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men Thereby****Article 1**

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

**Article 2**

Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.



### **Article 3**

The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

### **Article 4**

This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Saviour for us; and, moreover, because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

### **Article 5**

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

### **Article 6**

And, whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

### **Article 7**

But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

### **Article 8**

For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity

chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them, free from every spot and blemish, to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

### **Article 9**

This purpose, proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will hence-forward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell; so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ; which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as its Saviour (who, as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross); and which may celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

### **Rejection of Errors**

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

#### **Paragraph 1**

Who teach: That God the Father has ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness, and worth of what Christ merited by His death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect, and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person. For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus says our Saviour: I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them (John 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Saviour: When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe the catholic Christian Church.

#### **Paragraph 2**

Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood, but only that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as He might please, whether of grace or of works.

For this is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that Christ hath become the surety and mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where there hath been death (Heb. 7:22; 9:15, 17).

**Paragraph 3**

Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfil these conditions. For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, in no wise acknowledge the most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

**Paragraph 4**

Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood (Rom. 3:24, 25). And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

**Paragraph 5**

Who teach: That all men have been accepted unto the state of reconciliation and unto the grace of the covenant, so that no one is worthy of condemnation on account of original sin, and that no one shall be condemned because of it, but that all are free from the guilt of original sin. For this opinion is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).

**Paragraph 6**

Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instil into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded to apply to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace. For

these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instil into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

### **Paragraph 7**

Who teach: That Christ neither could die, nor needed to die, and also did not die, for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, since these do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who declares: Christ loved me, and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20). Likewise: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified; who is he that condemned? It is Christ Jesus that died (Rom. 8:33, 34), namely, for them; and the Saviour who says: I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15). And: This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12, 13).

## **Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine**

### **The Corruption of Man, His Conversion To God, and the Manner Thereof**

#### **Article 1**

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy. But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and in the place thereof became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

#### **Article 2**

Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God.

#### **Article 3**

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

**Article 4**

There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behaviour. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and hinders in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

**Article 5**

In the same light are we to consider the law of the Decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet, as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from this misery, but, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

**Article 6**

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation; which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it has pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.

**Article 7**

This mystery of His will God revealed to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New Testament (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals it to many. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their better use of the light of nature, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated, above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, but in no wise curiously to pry into, the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed in others to whom this grace is not given.

**Article 8**

As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto Him. He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

#### **Article 9**

It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves; some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the Word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

#### **Article 10**

But that others who are called by the gospel obey the call and are converted is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains); but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who, as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He calls them effectually in time, confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son; that they may show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, and may glory not in themselves but in the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

#### **Article 11**

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.

#### **Article 12**

And this is that regeneration so highly extolled in Scripture, that renewal, new creation, resurrection from the dead, making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvellous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also man himself is rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received.

### **Article 13**

The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Nevertheless, they are satisfied to know and experience that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart and to love their Saviour.

### **Article 14**

Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred upon him, breathed and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to work, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

### **Article 15**

God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is in no apprehension of danger, and vainly boasts the possession of that which he has not. Further, with respect to those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favourable manner; for the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us.

And as to others who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

#### **Article 16**

But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death, so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, or do violence thereto; but it spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it, that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work so deal with us, man can have no hope of being able to rise from his fall by his own free will, by which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

#### **Article 17**

As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but require the use of means by which God, of His infinite mercy and goodness, has chosen to exert His influence, so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline; so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more clearly this favour of God, working in us, usually manifests itself, and the more directly His work is advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.

#### **Rejection of Errors**

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:



**Paragraph 1**

Who teach: That it cannot properly be said that original sin in itself suffices to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment. For these contradict the apostle, who declares: Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned (Rom. 5:12). And: The judgment came of one unto condemnation (Rom. 5:16). And: The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

**Paragraph 2**

Who teach: That the spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and that these, therefore, cannot have been separated therefrom in the fall. For such is contrary to the description of the image of God which the apostle gives in Eph. 4:24, where he declares that it consists in righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

**Paragraph 3**

Who teach: That in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will in itself has never been corrupted, but only hindered through the darkness of the understanding and the irregularity of the affections; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its native powers, that is, that the will of itself is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it. This is an innovation and an error, and tends to elevate the powers of the free will, contrary to the declaration of the prophet: The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt (Jer. 17:9); and of the apostle: Among whom (sons of disobedience) we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Eph. 2:3).

**Paragraph 4**

Who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God. For these things are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture: Ye were dead through your trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5). And: Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

**Paragraph 5**

Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, that is, the evangelical or saving grace, and salvation itself; and that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion. For both the experience of all ages and the Scriptures testify that this is untrue. He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his ordinances, they have not known them (Ps. 147:19, 20). Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own way (Acts 14:16). And: And they (Paul and his companions) having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not (Acts 16:6, 7).

#### **Paragraph 6**

Who teach: That in the true conversion of man no new qualities, powers, or gifts can be infused by God into the will, and that therefore faith, through which we are first converted and because of which we are called believers, is not a quality or gift infused by God but only an act of man, and that it cannot be said to be a gift, except in respect of the power to attain to this faith. For thereby they contradict the Holy Scriptures, which declare that God infuses new qualities of faith, of obedience, and of the consciousness of His love into our hearts: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart I will write it (Jer. 31:33). And: I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed (Isa. 44:3). And: The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us (Rom. 5:5). This is also repugnant to the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned (Jer. 31:18).

#### **Paragraph 7**

Who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising, or (as others explain it) that this is the noblest manner of working in the conversion of man, and that this manner of working, which consists in advising, is most in harmony with man's nature; and that there is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the consent of the will except through this manner of advising; and that the power of the divine working, whereby it surpasses the working of Satan, consists in this that God promises eternal, while Satan promises only temporal goods. But this is altogether Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture, which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirit's working in

the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

### **Paragraph 8**

Who teach: That God in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of His omnipotence as potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit, when God intends man's regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that man often does so resist that he prevents entirely his regeneration, and that it therefore remains in man's power to be regenerated or not. For this is nothing less than the denial of all the efficiency of God's grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of Almighty God to the will of man, which is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe according to the working of the strength of his might (Eph. 1:19); and that God fulfils every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power (2 Thess. 1:11); and that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

### **Paragraph 9**

Who teach: That grace and free will are partial causes which together work the beginning of conversion, and that grace, in order of working, does not precede the working of the will; that is, that God does not efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves and determines to do this. For the ancient Church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: So then it is not of him that willed, nor of him that run, but of God that hath mercy (Rom. 9:16). Likewise: For who made thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7). And: For it is God who worked in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

## **Fifth Head of Doctrine**

### **The Perseverance of the Saints**

#### **Article 1**

Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.

#### **Article 2**

Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity, and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints. These are to them a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

### **Article 3**

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

### **Article 4**

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they may not be led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually are drawn into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

### **Article 5**

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favour, until, when they change their course by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

### **Article 6**

But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

### **Article 7**

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the mediator, may again experience the favour of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

#### **Article 8**

Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

#### **Article 9**

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue true and living members of the Church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

#### **Article 10**

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

#### **Article 11**

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that

they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

### **Article 12**

This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervency in prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

### **Article 13**

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He has ordained, that they who walk therein may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

### **Article 14**

And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatening, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

### **Article 15**

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. However, the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory forever. Amen.

### **Rejection of Errors**

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

### **Paragraph 1**

Who teach: That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfil through his free will. For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and intercession of Christ: But the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened (Rom. 11:7). Likewise: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified; who is he that condemned? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also made intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:32-35).

### **Paragraph 2**

Who teach: That God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere, and is ever ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty; but that, though all things which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith are made use of, even then it ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not. For this idea contains an outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honour, contrary to the prevailing agreement of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this favour to the grace of God alone; and contrary to the apostle, who declares that it is God, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprouable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).

### **Paragraph 3**

Who teach: That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever. For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: That, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him (Rom. 5:8, 9). And contrary to the apostle John: Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abide in him; and he can not sin, because he is begotten of God (1 John 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:28, 29).

#### **Paragraph 4**

Who teach: That true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit.

Since the same apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, vs. 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in vs. 18: We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinned not (meaning a sin of that character), but he that was begotten of God kept himself, and the evil one touched him not (1 John 5:18).

#### **Paragraph 5**

Who teach; That without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.

For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the Church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the very constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39). And John declares: And he that kept his commandments abide in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abide in us, by the Spirit which he gave us (1 John 3:24).

#### **Paragraph 6**

Who teach: That the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation from its own character and nature is a cause of indolence and is injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt. For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with express words in his first epistle: Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purified himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:2, 3). Furthermore, these are contradicted by the example of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness.

#### **Paragraph 7**

Who teach: That the faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration. For Christ Himself, in Matthew 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, besides this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true



believers, when He declares that the former receive the seed in stony ground, but the latter in the good ground or heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; that the former are without fruit, but that the latter bring forth their fruit in various measure, with constancy and steadfastness.

### **Paragraph 8**

Who teach: That it is not absurd that one having lost his first regeneration is again and even often born anew. For these deny by this doctrine the incorruptibleness of the seed of God, whereby we are born again; contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible (1 Pet. 1:23).

### **Paragraph 9**

Who teach: That Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith. For they contradict Christ Himself, who says: I made supplication for thee (Simon), that thy faith fail not (Luke 22:32), and the evangelist John, who declares that Christ has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for those who through their word would believe: Holy Father, keep them in thy name, and: I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil one (John 17:11, 15, 20).

### **Conclusion**

And this is the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic Churches; and the rejection of the errors, with which they have for some time been troubled. This doctrine the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confession of the Reformed Churches. Whence it clearly appears that some, whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public:

"That the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil; and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than an interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and, therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, if the

reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation; that the same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and has created them for this very purpose; that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell: so that neither baptism nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism can at all profit them" and many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.

Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures as many as piously call upon the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ to judge of the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the calumnies which on every side are heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves, and from this declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the whole Synod. Moreover, the Synod warns calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many Churches; for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for labouring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful.

Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the Divine name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language, and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures, and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches. May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth; bring to the truth those who err; shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful ministers of his Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of those who hear them. Amen.

### **ADDENDUM 3**

#### **CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT 1619**

FORMULATED IN THE NATIONAL SYNOD CONVENED AND HELD BY ORDER OF THE HIGH AND MIGHTY STATES GENERAL OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS, AT DORDTRECHT, IN THE YEARS 1618–1619

To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary to have in it offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline, concerning which [matters the following articles] appropriately deal with.

1.

#### **CONCERNING THE OFFICES**

2. There are four kinds of offices: ministers of the Word, Doctors (Professors), elders, and deacons.

3. No one, though he be a professor, elder or deacon shall be permitted to enter the ministry of the Word and sacraments without having been lawfully called thereto; and if anyone acts contrary thereto and, having been frequently admonished, does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.

4. The lawful calling of those who formerly have not been in office, both in the cities and in the country, consists: first, in their election, which shall be carried out after previous fasting and prayer by the consistory and deacons, and this shall not take place without correspondence with the Christian authorities of the respective place, and the foreknowledge or advice of the classis where until now this has been customary. Second, in the examination or investigation both of doctrine and life which shall be done by the classis in the presence of the deputies of the synod or some of the same. Third, in the approbation and approval of the authorities, and thereafter of the members of the local Reformed congregation, when the name of the minister having been announced in the churches for fourteen days (two weeks), no objection is presented. Finally, in the public ordination in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with proper stipulations and questions, admonitions, prayer and laying on of hands by the minister who conducts the ordination service (or any others, if there are more ministers present) according to the form for this purpose, with the understanding that the laying on of hands may be done in the classical meeting for the newly graduated minister who is sent to the Churches under the Cross.

5. Inviting ministers who are now already in the ministry of the Word and calling them to another congregation shall take place by the same method of calling as above, both in the cities and in the country, by the consistory and deacons with the advice and approbation of the classis, to whom the aforesaid called [minister] shall present good ecclesiastical credentials of doctrine and life. And having thus been approved by the magistrate of the respective place and having been presented to the congregation for fourteen days,

as above, they shall be installed with previous stipulations and prayers. Without abridging what is previously said, anyone [who has] a valid gift of speaking or any other gift insofar as it can be used in an edifying way without detriment to God's Church and to the good order of the church, the government and synods of the respective Provinces will do well to take note of these things and maintain the necessary order for the best interests of the churches.

6. Also no minister may accept a ministry in any particular manors, hospitals or otherwise unless he has previously been admitted and permitted to do so in accordance with the previous articles and he shall no less than others be subject to the Church Order.

7. No one shall be called to the ministry of the Word without being stationed in a specific place, unless he is sent to preach in various places in the Churches under the Cross or otherwise to establish (new) churches.

8. No schoolmasters, artisans or others who have not followed the prescribed course of study for the ministry shall be admitted to the ministry, unless there is assurance of their singular gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense, and discretion, together with gifts of public speaking. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the classis shall (if the synod approves) first examine them, and after the classis by the examination finds them acceptable, it shall allow them to exhort for a time, and then further deal with them as it judges shall be edifying.

9. Novices, priests, monks and those who leave any sect shall not be admitted to the ministry except with great care and caution after they have also first been tested for a certain time.

10. A minister once lawfully called may not leave the congregation where he has been unconditionally accepted to accept a call elsewhere without the approval of the consistory and the deacons and of those who formerly have been in the office of elder and deacon, together with the approval of the magistrate and the foreknowledge of classis. Likewise, no other church may accept him before he has presented a lawful testimony of his departure from the church and classis where he has served.

11. On the other hand the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide their ministers with adequate support and are not to dismiss them without the knowledge and judgment of classis, which in case of lack of support shall also judge whether or not the aforesaid ministers are to be transferred.

12. Since a minister of the Word, once lawfully called as above, is bound to the service of the church for life, he shall not be allowed to enter a secular occupation except for great and weighty reasons of which the classis shall take note and judge.

13. If it happens that some ministers because of age, sickness or otherwise become incapable of performing their ministry, they shall nevertheless in spite of this retain the honour and title of a minister, and shall be honourably supported in their need by the church which they have served (likewise the widows and orphans of the ministers generally).

14. If any ministers for the aforesaid or any other reasons must leave their office for a time (which shall not be done without the advice of the consistory), they shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.
15. No one is permitted, having left the ministry of his church or being in no fixed ministry, to go preaching here and there without the consent of the synod or classis; so also no one may preach or administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of that consistory.
16. The office of the ministers is to continue in prayer and the ministry of the Word, to administer the sacraments, to watch over their colleagues, the elders and deacons, together with the whole congregation, and finally to exercise church discipline with the elders and to see to it that everything is done decently and orderly.
17. Equality shall be maintained among the ministers of the Word concerning the duties of their office, as also in other things as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and (if necessary) of the classis, which shall also be maintained among the elders and deacons.
18. The office of the Doctors or Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend sound doctrine against heresies and errors.
19. The churches shall exert themselves that there are theological students who are supported *ex bonis publicis* (out of the general treasury).
20. In churches where there are more competent ministers the use of exhorters shall be introduced in order by such means to prepare persons for the ministry of the Word, following in this the order especially prepared for this by the synod.
21. All consistories shall see to it that there are good school masters who not only teach the children reading, writing, languages and liberal arts but also train them in godliness and in the catechism.
22. Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons, so that according to its circumstances each church is at liberty to propose to the congregation as many elders as are needed in order that (unless some obstacle arise) after having been approved and certified by it they may be ordained with public prayers and stipulations; or a double number in order to have half of them chosen by the congregation and to be ordained into office in the same manner, using the prescribed form for this.
23. The office of elder is, besides what is said above in article 16 to be (their office) in common with the minister of the Word, to see to it that the ministers together with their other helpers and deacons faithfully exercise their office, and according to the circumstance of time and place to conduct family visiting for the edification of the congregation insofar as this can be done before and after the Lord's Supper. especially to comfort the members of the congregation, to teach. and also to exhort others to profess the Christian religion.

24. The same procedure which applies to the elders shall be maintained in the election, approbation and ordination of deacons.

25. The specific office of the deacons is diligently to gather the alms and other goods for the poor and to distribute the same faithfully and diligently according to the requirements of the needy, both residents and strangers, by common consent, to visit and comfort the distressed, and to see to it that the alms are not misused, of which they shall give an account in the consistory and also (if anyone wants to be present) in a congregational meeting, at such a time as the consistory shall see fit.

26. In places where there are charity workers or other distributors of alms the deacons shall seek to keep in close correspondence with them to the end that the alms may better be distributed among those who have the greatest need.

27. Elders and deacons shall serve for two years, and each year one-half the number shall retire and others installed in their place, unless the circumstances and welfare of any church demand otherwise.

28. Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, to help the ministers, elders and deacons in all existing need and to protect them by their good order, all ministers, elders, and deacons are duty bound diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect they owe the magistrates. All ecclesiastical persons shall set a good example to the congregation in this, and by proper respect and correspondence seek to awaken and maintain the favour of the government, toward the churches to the end that each one on each side doing his duty in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and good unity be maintained for the welfare of the churches.

## **CONCERNING ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES**

29. Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classical meetings, the particular synods, and the general or national (synod).

30. In these assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only that shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor [assemblies], or that which concerns the churches of the major assembly in common.

31. If anyone complains that he has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he may appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly and that which is decided by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles adopted in this general synod as long as these are not changed by another general synod.

32. The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin with calling on God's name and be closed with thanksgiving.

33. Those delegated to the assemblies shall bring along their credentials and instructions, signed by those who delegated them. Only those [delegated] shall be entitled to vote.

34. In all assemblies a clerk shall be chosen in addition to the president, who shall diligently write down that which is to be recorded.

35. The office of the president is to state and to explain what is to be considered, to see to it that everyone observes good order in speaking, to order the wrangler and those too vehement in speaking to be silent, and, for those who give heed. Further, his office shall cease when the assembly adjourns.

36. The classis has the same authority over the consistory that the particular synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the particular.

37. In every congregation there shall be a consistory consisting of ministers of the Word and elders, who shall meet at least every week at which the minister of the Word (or ministers, if there are more than one) shall preside in turn and govern the proceeding.

Also, if the magistrates of the respective places wish, they may have one or two of their number, who are members of the church, [meet) with the consistory to listen and to deliberate concerning matters that take place.

38. It is understood that in places where the consistory is to be newly established, the same cannot take place except with the advice of the classis. Where the number of elders is very small, the deacons shall be included in the consistory.

39. In places where as yet there is no consistory, the classis shall in the meantime do what the consistory is charged to do according to the provisions of this church order.

40. Similarly the deacons shall meet every week in order prayerfully to transact the business pertaining to their office, to which the ministers shall take good heed and, if necessary, be present.

42. In any place where there is more than one minister, they shall all be allowed to appear in classis and have a vote, except in matters that concern their persons or churches in particular.

41. The classical meetings shall consist of neighbouring churches, each of which shall delegate with proper credentials one minister and one elder to meet at the place and time [set] at the end of each meeting as was seen fit (nevertheless, this is not to be postponed more than three months). In these meetings the ministers shall preside in turn or otherwise be chosen to preside by the same assembly, but the same person may not be chosen twice in succession. Further, the president among other things shall ask each one whether the consistory meetings are held in their churches, whether church discipline is exercised, whether the poor and schools are provided for; finally, whether there is anything for which they need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their churches. The minister who was appointed by the previous classis for this purpose shall deliver a short sermon from God's Word, which the others shall critique, and, if it is

lacking in anything, they shall point this out. Finally, in the last meeting before the particular synod those who are to attend that synod shall be chosen.

43. At the close of classical and other major assemblies censure shall be exercised with respect to those who have done anything worthy of censure in the meeting, or who have scorned the admonitions of the minor assembly

44. The classis shall also authorize at least two of the oldest, most experienced and qualified ministers, annually to visit all the churches in the cities as well as in the country to discern whether the ministers, consistories and schoolmasters fulfill their offices faithfully, maintain purity of doctrine, maintain the accepted order in everything, and promote the edification of the congregation, together with that of the youth as is befitting. They shall do this as much as possible with both words and deeds in order that they may fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in one thing or another, and may help by word and deed to direct everything to the peace, upbuilding and the greatest profit of the churches and schools. Each classis may continue these visitors in their function as long as they wish, unless the visitors themselves, for reasons concerning which the classis shall judge, ask to be discharged.

45. The church in which the classis, also the particular or general synod, meets shall be responsible for delivering the minutes of the meeting to the following one.

46. The instructions concerning matters that are to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decision of preceding synods have been read so that what was once finished is not again proposed unless it is judged necessary to change it.

47. Every year, (unless need requires a shorter time) four or five or more neighbouring classes shall meet, to which particular synod two ministers and two elders shall be delegated from each classis. At the close of the particular as well as of the general synod a church shall be designated which shall be charged to set the time and place of the next synod with the advice of classis.

48. Each synod shall be free to request and to continue correspondence with its neighbouring synod or synods in such form as it shall judge most profitable for common edification.

49. Each synod shall also appoint certain persons in order to effect all that the synod has decided, both with the government and with the respective classes in its district, also in order together or with a smaller number to supervise all examinations of incoming ministers. Further, they shall extend help to the classes in all other difficulties that arise so that unity, order and purity of doctrine is maintained and stabilized. They shall keep good records of all their actions in order to give a report thereof to the synod, and, if it is demanded, to give reasons. Also, they shall not be discharged from their task before the synod itself discharges them from it.



50. The National Synod shall ordinarily be held once every three years, unless there is a pressing need to meet earlier. To this (synod) two ministers and two elders from each particular synod, both of the Dutch and Walloon languages, shall be delegated. Further, the church which has the task of setting the time and place of the general synod (if it is to be called within three years) shall gather its particular synod, and inform the neighbouring church which is of another language of this, which church shall send four persons there in order by common consent to decide concerning the time and place. The church which is chosen to convene the general synod, when it has consulted with the classis concerning time and place, shall inform the government in time about the same, so that with its knowledge and (if it wishes also to send someone to the classis) this may be decided in the presence and with the advice of its deputies.

51. Since two languages are spoken in the Netherlands, it is considered advisable that the churches using the Dutch and Walloon languages have their own consistories, classical meetings, and particular synods.

52. Nevertheless it is advisable that in the cities where the aforesaid Walloon churches are found some ministers and elders of both sides should gather every month in order to promote good unity and correspondence with one another and as much as possible to support one another with advice according to need.

### **CONCERNING DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES**

53. Ministers of the word, as well as Professors of Theology (which is also fitting for other professors) shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands churches. Ministers who refuse to do this shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until such time that they give a full explanation of this. If they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be completely deposed from their office.

54. Likewise, schoolmasters shall be required to subscribe to the articles as above, or in place of that to the Christian catechism.

55. No one of the Reformed religion shall undertake to have printed or otherwise distributed any book or writing produced or translated by himself or by another concerning religion unless the same has been examined and approved by the ministers of the Word of his classis, or by the particular synod of professors of theology of these provinces, including also the foreknowledge of his classis.

56. God's covenant shall be sealed for the children of Christians by baptism as soon as its administration can take place, and that in a public meeting when God's word is preached. But in places where few preaching services are held a certain day of the week shall be set aside to administer baptism extraordinarily. Nevertheless, this shall not take place without a sermon being preached.

57. Ministers shall do their best and strive to the end that the father present his child for baptism. In congregations where besides the fathers also godfathers or witnesses are taken to the baptism (which custom in itself is optional and should not be lightly changed) it is fitting that those be taken who hold to pure doctrine and are of pious behaviour.

58. In the baptism of young children as well as of adults the minister shall use the forms of the institution and administration of baptism which have been respectively drawn up for that purpose.

59. Adults are by baptism engrafted into the Christian church and accepted as members of the church, and therefore are duty bound to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.

60. The names of those baptized together with those of the parents and witnesses as well as the date of baptism shall be recorded.

61. Only those shall be admitted to the Lord's supper who, according to the usage of the churches which they join, have made confession of the Reformed religion, together with having testimony of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other churches shall not be admitted.

62. Each church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it judges best contributes to edification, but with the understanding that the external ceremonies prescribed in God's word are not changed, all superstition is avoided, and that after the completion of the sermon and the general prayers from the pulpit the form for the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer pertaining to it, shall be read in front of the table.

63. The Lord's Supper shall be administered once every two months, as much as possible. It is also edifying, wherever the circumstances of the churches allow, that the same be done on Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. But in places where as yet there is no organized congregation, elders and deacons shall first be provisionally installed.

64. Since the evening prayers are in many places found to be fruitful, each church following this practice shall do what it deems to be most edifying. But whenever there is the desire to eliminate them, this shall not take place without the judgment of classis, together with that of the authority for the Reformed religion.

65. Where funeral sermons are not held, they shall not be introduced; and where they already have been accepted, diligence shall be exercised to do away with them by the most appropriate means.

66. In times of war, pestilence, national calamities, severe persecution of the churches and other general difficulties, the ministers shall petition the government that by its authority and order public fasting and prayer days may be designated and set aside.

67. The congregations shall observe, in addition to Sunday, also Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, with the following days. Since in most cities and Provinces of the Netherlands, besides these the days of the Circumcision and Ascension of Christ are also observed, all ministers, wherever this is still the custom, shall put forth effort with the authorities that they may conform with the others.

68. Ministers shall on each Lord's Day, ordinarily in the afternoon sermons, briefly explain the sum of Christian doctrine contained in the catechism which at present is accepted in the Netherlands Churches in such a way that it may be completed annually, following the division of the catechism itself made for that purpose.

69. In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the 12 Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon shall be sung. It is left to the option of the churches whether to use or omit the song, O God, who art our Father.

70. Since it is found that up to the present various customs are everywhere observed in matrimonial matters, and because it is fitting to practice uniformity in this, the churches shall keep the custom which they have to this time observed, conformable to God's Word and previous ecclesiastical ordinances, until a general ordinance shall be made for this by the government with advice of the ministers (which shall be requested immediately) to which this church order refers in this article.

#### **CONCERNING CENSURE AND ECCLESIASTICAL ADMONITIONS**

71. Inasmuch as Christian discipline is spiritual (in character) and exempts no one from civil trial and punishment, as besides civil punishment ecclesiastical censure is necessarily demanded in order to remove the offense from the church of Christ.

72. When someone sins against the purity of doctrine or godly conduct, insofar as it is secret and has given no public offense, the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be maintained.

73. Secret sins concerning which the sinner, having been admonished by one person in private or before two or three witnesses, repents, shall not be brought before the consistory.

74. If someone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons does not listen, or otherwise has committed a public sin, such shall be reported to the consistory.

75. Concerning all such sins which by their nature were public or because ecclesiastical admonition has been despised have become public, the reconciliation (when certain signs of repentance are seen) shall take place publicly, by judgment of the consistory. In the country or in smaller cities where there is only one minister this must be done with the advice of two neighboring churches in such a

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form and manner as shall be judged fitting for the edification of each church.

76. One who obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory or who has committed a public or otherwise gross sin shall be barred from the Lord's Supper. If he, having been barred, shows no repentance after several admonitions, the extreme remedy, namely excommunication, shall finally be taken, following the form prepared for this according to the Word of God; but no one shall be excommunicated except with the previous advice of the classis.

77. Before proceeding to excommunication the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly announced to the congregation, explaining the sin, together with the diligence shown him in punishing, barring from the Lord's Supper and by many admonitions, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. Three such admonitions shall take place. In the first, the sinner shall not be named so that he is somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of classis his name shall be mentioned. In the third, the congregation shall be informed that unless he repents he shall be excommunicated from the fellowship of the churches so that his excommunication, if he remains obstinate, will take place with the tacit approbation of the churches. The time between the admonitions shall be left to the judgment of the consistory.

78. When an excommunicated person wishes to be reconciled with the congregation by way of repentance, it shall be announced to the congregation before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or otherwise beforehand according to circumstances, to the end that at the next Lord's Supper (insofar as no one knows of anything to bring forward to the contrary) he may be reinstated publicly with profession of his conversion, following the form for this purpose.

79. When ministers, elders or deacons commit a public gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or is punishable by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately be deposed from office, but ministers shall be suspended. Whether the minister shall be completely deposed from office shall be up to the judgment of the classis.

80. Further, among the gross sins that are worthy of being punished by suspension or deposition from office these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion into another's office, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre, in short, all sins and gross offenses which make the perpetrator dishonourable before the world and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication.

81. Ministers of the Word, elders and deacons shall exercise Christian censure among themselves and admonish one another in a friendly way concerning the exercise of their offices.

82. To those who move away from their congregations a certificate or testimony of their conduct shall be given by the decision of the consistory under the seal of the churches, or where there is no seal signed by two (persons).

83. Further, the poor who move for sufficient reasons shall be given assistance by the deacons with discretion, also notion on the back of their certificate the place where they wish to go and the help that has been given to them.

84. No church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.

85. In indifferent matters the foreign churches which have different customs from our own shall not be rejected.

86. These articles concerning the lawful order of the churches have been so formulated and adopted by common consent that, if the welfare of the churches demands otherwise, they may and ought to be altered, added to or diminished. Nevertheless, no individual congregation, classis or synod shall be permitted to do this, but they shall diligently seek to maintain them until [it] is otherwise ordered by the General or National Synod.

So done and decided in the National Synod in Dordrecht the 28th of May, 1619. Signed with our knowledge. And was signed: Johannes Bogermannus, Pres. of Synod Jacobus Rolandus, Assessor Bermannus Faukelius, Praesidis Assessor Sebastianus Damman, Clerk of Synod Festus Hommius, Clerk of Synod

## **ADDENDUM 4**

### **CONFESSION OF BELHAR**

#### **The Accompanying Letter**

1. We are deeply conscious that moments of such seriousness can arise in the life of the Church that it may feel the need to confess its faith anew in the light of a specific situation. We are aware that such an act of confession is not lightly undertaken, but only if it is considered that the heart of the gospel is so threatened as to be at stake. In our judgement, the present church and political situation in our country and particularly within the Dutch Reformed Church family calls for such a decision. Accordingly, we make this confession not as a contribution to a theological debate nor as a new summary of our beliefs, but as a cry from the heart, as something we are obliged to do for the sake of the gospel in view of the times in which we stand. Along with many, we confess our guilt, in that we have not always witnessed clearly enough in our situation and so are jointly responsible for the way in which those things which were experienced as sin and confessed to be so or should have been experienced as and confessed to be sin have grown in time to seem self-evidently right and to be ideologies foreign to the scriptures. As a result many have been given the impression that the gospel was not really at stake. We make this confession because we are convinced that all sorts of theological arguments have contributed to so disproportionate an emphasis on some aspects of the truth that it has in effect become a lie.

2. We are aware that the only authority for such a confession and the only grounds on which it may be made are the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. Being fully aware of the risks involved in taking this step, we are nevertheless convinced that we have no alternative. Furthermore, we are aware that no other motives or convictions, however valid they may be, would give us the right to confess in this way. An act of confession may only be made by the Church for the sake of its purity and credibility and that of its message. As solemnly as we are able, we hereby declare before everyone that our only motive lies in our fear that the truth and power of the gospel itself is threatened in this situation. We do not wish to serve any group interests, advance the cause of any factions, promote any theologies or achieve any ulterior purposes. Yet, having said this, we know that our deepest intentions may only be judged at their true value by God before whom all is revealed. We do not make this confession from God's throne and from on high, but before God's throne and before other human beings. We plead therefore, that this Confession should not be misused by anyone with ulterior motives and also that it should not be resisted to serve such motives. Our earnest desire is to lay no false stumbling blocks in the way, but to point to the true stumbling block Jesus Christ the rock.

3. This confession is not aimed at specific people or groups of people or a church or churches. We proclaim it against a false doctrine, against an ideological distortion that threatens the gospel itself in our church and our country. Our heartfelt longing is that no-one will identify themselves with this objectionable doctrine and that all who have been wholly or partially blinded by it will turn themselves away from it. We are deeply aware of the deceiving nature of such a false doctrine and know that many who have been conditioned by it have to a greater or lesser extent learnt to take a half-truth for the whole. For this reason we do not doubt the Christian faith of many such people, their sincerity, honour, integrity and good intentions, and theirs in many ways estimable practice and conduct. However, it is precisely because we know the power of deception that we know we are not liberated by the seriousness, sincerity or intensity of our certainties, but only by the truth in the Son. Our church and our land have an intense need of such liberation. Therefore it is that we speak pleadingly rather than accusingly. We plead for reconciliation, that true reconciliation which follows on conversion and change of attitudes and structures. And while we do so we are aware that an act of confession is a two-edged sword, that none of us can throw the first stone, and none is without a beam in their own eye. We know that the attitudes and conduct that work against the gospel are present in all of us and will continue to be so. Therefore this Confession must be seen as a call to a continuous process of soul-searching together, a joint wrestling with the issues, and a readiness to repent in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in a broken world. It is certainly not intended as an act of self-justification and intolerance, for that would disqualify us in the very act of preaching to others.

4. Our prayer is that this act of confession will not place false stumbling blocks in the way and thereby cause and foster false divisions, but rather that it will be reconciling and uniting. We know that such an act of confession and process of reconciliation will necessarily involve much pain and sadness. It demands the pain of repentance, remorse and confession; the pain of individual and collective renewal and a changed way of life. It places us on a road whose end we can neither foresee nor manipulate to our own desire. On this road we shall unavoidably suffer intense growing pains while we struggle to conquer alienation, bitterness, irreconciliation and fear. We shall have to come to know and encounter both ourselves and others in new ways. We are only too well aware that this confession calls for the dismantling of structures of thought, of church, and of society that have developed over many years. However, we confess that for the sake of the gospel, we have no other choice. We pray that our brothers and sisters throughout the Dutch Reformed Church family, but also outside it, will want to make this new beginning with us, so that we can be free together, and together may walk the road of reconciliation and justice. Accordingly, our prayer is that the pain and sadness we speak of will be pain and sadness that lead to salvation. We believe that this is possible in the power of our Lord and by God's Spirit. We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ offers hope, liberation, salvation and true peace to our country

### **The Belhar Confession**

*[Note: The synod of the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) adopted the draft Confession of Belhar in 1982 with an accompanying letter. These two documents should always be read together. In 1986 the DRMC adopted the Confession of Belhar in its final version in Afrikaans. The 2008 General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), which resulted from the reunification between the former Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the DRMC, declared the 1986 Afrikaans version to be the original source document. The 2008 URCSA General Synod in addition adopted the English translation that follows here as the official English version.]*

1. We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who through Word and Spirit gathers, protects and cares for the church from the beginning of the world and will do to the end.
2. We believe in one holy, universal Christian Church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another (Eph. 2:11-22); that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is an abiding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain (Eph. 4:1-16); that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted (John 17:20-23) that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another (Philem. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-31); that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptised with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one Name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and up build one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against everything that may threaten or hinder this unity (John 13:1-17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:1-6; Eph. 3:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Gal. 6:2; 2 Cor. 1:3-4); that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities,



backgrounds, convictions, as well as the diversity of languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:7-13; Gal. 3:27-28; James 2:1-13); that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which absolutises either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutisation hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation; which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace whilst believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation; which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin; which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.

3. We believe that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 5:9; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21-22); that God's life-giving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity; that God's life-giving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world (Eph. 4:17 – 6:23; Romans 6; Col. 1:9-14; Col. 2:13-19; Col 3:1 – 4:61:9-14); that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity; that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

4. We believe that God has revealed Godself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace on earth; that in a world full of injustice and enmity God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that God calls the church to follow in this; that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that God supports the downtrodden, protects the strangers, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that God wishes to teach the people of God to do what is good and to seek the right (Deut. 32:4; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; Eph. 2:14; Isaiah 1:16-17; James 1:27; James 5:1-6; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 6:20-26; Luke 7:22; Luke 16:19-31); that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Psalm 146; Luke 4:16-19; Romans 6:13-18; Amos 5); that the church belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

5. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Eph. 4:15-16; Acts 5:29-33; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 1 Peter 3:15-18).

Jesus is Lord. To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever

**ADDENDUM 5**  
**CONSTITUTION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA**  
**(REVISED VERSION 1992)**

**PREAMBLE**

Whereas in the year 1994 the consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church at Eldoret, in obedience to the Word of God and mindful of the needs of the African laborers on the farms of its members, established a Mission Committee in order to organize by means of this Committee as its executive organ a Christian Mission among the said laborers, under the Name of “Bwana Loubser Sending”. And whereas in the same year, at the invitation of the said Consistory and the said Committee, a Missionary, the Rev. Benjamin Beaumann Eybers, came to Kenya and took the guidance of the mission, so instituted upon him, especially the work of training ministers and evangelists: And whereas the said Mission was used by God for building up a company of believers among the said laborers through the work of its ministers, posted at stations at Eldoret, Plateau and North of Kitale, and through the work of its evangelists, placed on schools on several farms of the members of the Dutch Reformed Church: And whereas in the year 1959, on authority of the said consistory and the said committee, a form of church government was set up and inaugurated, under which the stations at Eldoret, Plateau and Trans Nzoia, which congregations together now formed a church of its own, elders were ordained, consistories were formed for the said congregations and a presbytery exercised jurisdiction over the said mission committee to carry on with the mission work.

And whereas in the year 1961 the “The Reformed Mission League” a nonprofitmaking mission board of the Netherlands Reformed Church, by authority of its resolution of its annual meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1961, has taken over the said Mission from the said Consistory and the said Committee, by authority of their resolution of their joint meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1961, with the agreement of the three said Congregations, as from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1961 and since that date the said Mission continues under the name of “Bwana Loubser Sending Mission”, which was the Kenya branch of the said Mission League, in close relationship with the said Congregations; And whereas the said Mission League had sent out in its Kenya branch several missionaries and mission workers for carrying out religious, educational, medical, social and literary work, which missionaries and mission workers form together the Conference of missionaries in the field.” And whereas on its annual meeting in July 1963, the said presbytery changed its name in Synod and adopted as the name of the Church “Reformed Church of East Africa”. And whereas agreement had been reached upon a Basis of Union by the Synod of the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) and the Bwana Loubser Sending Mission, by authority of the resolution of the meeting of its General Committee of the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1963 to enter the proposed Union;

And whereas the synod of the RCEA and the Bwana Loubser Mission declared in November 1963 that they been united as one Church and mission ad had adopted its first Constitution; And whereas the synod of the RCEA governed the church according to that constitution, while the said Mission League continued with mission work in many fields alongside the church under the guidance of the ‘Missionary Conference’. And whereas as from 1980 all the work, carried out by the church and the Mission, was brought under the Synod of the RCEA, for the management whereof the Synod installed an Executive Committee and the Office of the Executive general secretary; And whereas the synod of the Reformed Church of East Africa of 1982, declared that it wanted to revise the Constitution, which revision started on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1984 and was completed in August 1992. The synod of the RCEA of 1992 approves, after having considered several drafts earlier, the final draft of this revision and thus regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the Articles that follow:

## **Article 1**

### **Name, Membership and Jurisdiction of the Reformed Church of East Africa**

#### **The Name of the Church**

The name of this church is ‘the Reformed Church of East Africa’ hereinafter referred to as ‘The RCEA’ and /or ‘The Church’.

#### **1.1 The Church Consists Of Congregations**

The church consists of all the Reformed Congregations hitherto under the jurisdiction of the synod of the Reformed Church of East Africa, together with all congregations which may here after be founded through the work of the Reformed Church of East Africa and join its fellowship in accordance with this constitution.

#### **1.2 Jurisdiction of the Church**

The Reformed Church of East Africa shall establish under the umbrella of the Reformed Church of East Africa.

## **Article II Declaration of the Subjects and Fundamental Principles of the Church**

### **2.1 RCEA and the Universal Church**

The Reformed Church of East Africa is part of the one Holy Catholic or universal apostolic church.

### **2.2 RCEA and Scripture**

The Reformed Church of East Africa receives the Scripture of the Old and the New Testament as the infallible Word of God and as its supreme rule of faith and life.

### **2.3 The Confession of the Church**

The church receives the historic confession of the faith known as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasius Creed, as containing the sum and the substance of the faith of the church. The church adopts as a subordinate and provisional standard its catechism known as the 'Ketekisma' until such time as this church shall exercise its right to frame its own confession of faith.

### **2.4 The Right to Formulate Other Doctrinal Statements**

The church has the inherent right under the safeguards of deliberate action and legislation provided by the church itself, to frame or adopt its subordinate standards to define the sense in which it understands these standards, to modify the form of expression therein or to formulate other doctrinal statements, and to define the relation thereto of its office-bearers and members but always in agreement with the word of God and fundamental doctrines of Christian faith as set forth in these standards, of which agreement the church shall first judge with due regard to liberty of opinion.

### **2.5 Self Government**

The church, as part of the universal church, wherein the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed a government in the hands of church office-bearers receives from him its Divine King and Head and from him alone, the right and power to legislate and to adjudicate in all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline in this church, including the right to determine all questions concerning membership and office in the church, the Constitution and membership of its courts and the mode of elections of its office-bearers.

### **2.6 RCEA and Other Churches**

The church, believing it to be the will of Christ that His disciples shall be all one in the Father and in Him, that the world may believe that the Father has sent Him, recognizes the obligation to seek and promote union with other churches in which it finds the word of God to be purely preached, the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance and discipline rightly exercised; and it has the right to unite with any such church without loss of its identity on terms which this church finds to be consistent with these Articles.

### **2.7 Wholistic Ministry**

The church, in the discharge of its mission in the world cannot confine itself solely to the preaching of the Word and administration of purely religious ordinances believing that it is entrusted with a ministry not only to the soul of men, but also to their bodies and minds, the following the example of its master, who

went about doing good, it claims the right, as it shall see fit, to undertake educational, medical, social and literary work for the benefit of all who desire its help, and declare its willingness to cooperate with government and other agencies in promoting the mental, physical and moral welfare of the whole community.

## **2.8 Equality of Mankind**

The church believing that God is the creator of all men, that Christ died for all without distinction of race, tribe and color within its fellowship and service.

## **2.9 Interpretation of the Constitution**

The church has the right to interpret these articles and subject to the safeguards for the deliberate action and legislation provided by the church itself, modify or add to them, but always consistently with the provisions of Article 11 hereof, adherence to which as interpreted by the church, is essential to its continuity and corporate life.

## **2.10 Cooperation with Other Organizations**

The church has the right to cooperate with other organizations, to develop relationship and fellowship with other Christian organizations on terms which the church finds to be consistent with these Articles.

# **Article III The Government of the Church**

## **3.1 Presbyterian Government**

Least the one congregation shall lord it over the other, the one office over the other, the one office-bearer over the other, the government of this church is Presbyterian, which 'form' the church acknowledges as agreeable to the Word of God and proved in the experience of many Reformed churches.

## **3.2 The Courts of the Church**

According to this principles the government of this church is committed to courts of the church, namely local councils being the courts of the church for the local churches, the parish councils being the courts of the parishes the Presbytery councils being the courts of the Presbyteries and the synod being the supreme council of the whole church through its syndical meetings.

## **3.3 Rules of the Courts Made By the Synod**

The rules governing the composition, the powers and the duties, the method of procedure and the frequency of the meetings of the courts, the formation of all courts and their relationship to one another shall be laid down by the synod.

### **3.4 Ministry**

The church receives the ministry as the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to his church for the edification of the Body of Christ' The church agrees that this ministry is vested in and therefore recognizes the following offices:

1. Ministers
2. Elders
3. Deacons
4. Evangelists
5. Professors in Theology

#### **3.4.1 The Office of the Ministers**

A person shall be ordained as a minister of the church if:

- a. He is a member of the church
- b. He is a good reputation
- c. He testifies to be called by God to this Ministry
- d. He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- e. He has followed theological pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the synod.
- f. He is trustworthy and able to handle finances
- g. He is accepted by the synod for ordination to be a minister.

The main tasks of the minister are:

- a. To preach and teach the word of God
- b. To administer the sacraments and ceremonies of the church.
- c. To shepherd the congregations
- d. To admonish the congregations
- e. To give pastoral care
- f. To guard the church constitutions and doctrines
- g. To participate in the government of the church

#### **3.4.2 The office of elder**

A person shall be ordained as an elder of the church if:

- a. He is a member of the church
- b. He is a good reputation
- c. He is a committed Christian
- d. He is a biological male and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- e. He is conversant with church traditions and doctrines
- f. He has leadership qualities and is eager to learn.
- g. He is able to teach and preach.
- h. He is trustworthy and able to handle finances
- i. He is elected by the local church to be an elder.

The main tasks of the elder are:

- a. To assist the pastor in his work.
- b. To take care for the pastors and evangelists welfare.
- c. To supervise the congregation with fellow elders
- d. To facilitate the implementation of parish policies and plans.
- e. To protect the congregation from unbiblical teachings and teachings contrary to the church doctrine.
- f. To participate in the government of the church.

### **3.4.3 The Office of the Deacon**

A person shall be ordained as a deacon of the church if:

- a. He or she is a member of the church
- b. He or she is of good reputation
- c. He or she is committed Christian
- d. He or she is a biological male or female, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- e. He or she is conversant with the church traditions and doctrines
- f. He or she has leadership qualities and is eager to learn.
- g. He or she able to teach and preach.
- h. He or she is trustworthy and able to handle finances.
- i. He or she is elected by the local church to be a deacon.

The main tasks of the deacons are:

- a. To assist the pastor in his work.
- b. To deal with the social and spiritual needs of all within the bounds of the local church
- c. To take care for the properties of the church , together with the elders



- d. To participate in the government of the church.

#### **3.4.4 The office of the evangelist**

A person shall be ordained as an evangelist of the church if:

- a. He is a member of the church
- b. He is of good reputation
- c. He testifies to be called by God to this ministry
- d. He is a biological male and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.
- e. He has followed theological pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the synod.
- f. He is trustworthy and able to handle finances.
- g. He is accepted by the parish council for ordination to be an evangelist.

The main tasks of the evangelist are:

- a. To preach and teach the word of God.
- b. To evangelize the unbelievers and the unreached
- c. To teach the 'Katekisma' and other church doctrines
- d. To educate the elders and deacons
- e. To conduct pastoral programs in the church sponsored schools
- f. To shepherd the congregations
- g. To admonish the congregations
- h. To give pastoral care.
- i. To guard the church constitution and doctrines
- j. To participate in the government of the church.

#### **3.4.5 The office of the professor of Theology**

A person shall be ordained as a professor in Theology of the church if:

He is members of the church

He is a good reputation

He testifies to be called by God to this ministry

He is a biological male, and if married, only monogamously in a church ceremony.

He has followed theological, pastoral and professional training and passed up to standards set by the synod.

He is qualified to teach theology in any public or private university.

He is accepted by the synod for ordination to be professor in Theology

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The main tasks of the professor of theology are:

- a. To preach and teach the word of God
- b. To teach students at Institutes of Higher Learning the subjects he is specialized in.
- c. To advise the church in theological issues
- d. To promote further learning in the church.

## **Article IV The local church**

### **4.1 Preaching Post**

- i. A preaching post shall be established by the local church council in any area within their jurisdiction where are resident Christians, who are far from the existing local church.
- ii. The local church council shall appoint the following persons to serve in a preaching post;
  - a. The parish minister who shall serve as an adviser and guider
  - b. An evangelist who shall assist in evangelizing and teaching.
  - c. One elder being a member of the local church council who is ordinarily resident in the area being served by the preaching post , or
  - d. An elder being a member of the lol church council who does not ordinarily reside in the area served by the preaching post and such an elder shall be referred to as an associate elder.
- iii. The members of a preaching post shall elect a preaching post committee comprising of not less than three and not more than five members who will run the affairs of the preaching post under the guidance of the local church council.
- iv. The preaching post committee shall elect a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer from among its members.

### **4.2 Formation of a new local church**

- i. A preaching post shall have he following persons in order to be allowed to form its own local church by the local church taking care of it.
  - a. At least 3 ordained elders and two ordained deacons
  - b. A local church council which shall be elected by the members of the new church. The election shall be supervised by the local church taking care of it. A church minister shall chair the meeting, electing the chairperson, secretary and the treasurer. In the absence of the church minister, an elder of the local church which has been taking care of this new local church shall chair the meeting.

- c. A minister and an evangelist who shall serve as advisers, teachers and guiders of the new local church.
- ii. The office-bearers of the new local church council shall be the chairperson, the secretary, their deputies and the treasurer. They shall be the elected from among the ordained elders and deacons of the local church.

#### **4.3 The local church**

- i. The membership of a local church shall be open to:
  - a. All who have been baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and
  - b. Who accept faith and worship of the church; and
  - c. Who are willing to abide by the laws and customs of the church
  - d. Baptized members from the other churches, who are welcomed before the congregation as soon as they are conversant with the church doctrine.
  - e. Unbaptized members of the other churches who have followed baptism class training and who are baptized by the church.
  - f. Baptised children of the church members who share in privileges and obligations of membership of their parents' until such a time when they shall be confirmed at the age at least 12 years.
- ii. The local church with its minister is the essential basis of all the organizations of the church and ideally is the expression of the universal church within the parish under which it falls.
- iii. The local church is responsible for :
  - a. Worshipping God in the Sunday services, places of work and homes
  - b. Pastoral care of all its members
  - c. Evangelization of all who live within its bounds
  - d. Service to fellow men.
  - e. Its due contribution to the work of the whole church.
- iv. Except in special cases approved by the synod, parishes or local churches, only those members who have been admitted to the communion role of the church shall be eligible for election to an office within the church or take part in the election of others.

#### **4.4 The local church council**

- i. Each local church shall have a local church council
- ii. The local church council shall consist of the following voting members:
  - a. All member of the elders committee

- b. All members of the diaconal committee and the following coopted members:
- c. Youth group representative
- d. Sunday school representative
- e. Women fellowship representative
- f. Representatives from sub committees if any.
- g. The parish minister
- h. The parish evangelist

#### **4.5 Office-Bearers**

The local church council shall have the following office-bearers:-

- i. Chairman
    - a. The chairman shall be elected by the local church members from among the ordained Elders of the local church
    - b. The chairman shall preside over the meeting of the local council.
  - ii. The Vice Chairman
    - a. The vice chairman shall be elected by the local church members from among the ordained elders of the local church.
    - b. The vice chairman shall preside over the meetings in the absence of the chairman..
    - c. He shall perform duties assigned to him by the chairman
  - iii. The secretary
    - a. The secretary shall be elected by the local church members from among the members of he local church.
    - b. The secretary shall take the minutes of the meeting of the local church council and shall be responsible for issuing notices for the meetings and circulating the agenda and carry out other secretarial duties.
  - iv. Vice Secretary
    - a. The vice secretary shall be elected by the local church members from among the members of the local church.
    - b. The vice secretary shall perform secretarial duties as assigned to him by the secretary.
    - c. In the absence of the secretary, the vice secretary shall perform all the duties of the secretary.
  - v. Treasurer
- 10 The treasurer shall be elected by the local church members from among either the ordained elders or the ordained deacons of the local church.
- 11 The treasurer shall be responsible for financial matters of the local church.

vi. Powers and duties of the local church council

The power and duties of a local church council shall be as follows:

- a. It shall have authority in church matters over the whole area appointed to it by the parish council.
- b. It shall be the local court of the local church
- c. It shall assist the evangelist in the arrangements for public worship.
- d. It shall assist the ministers in the arrangements of public worship and sacraments.
- e. It shall supervise and control local church finance
- f. It shall approve suitable members to be ordained as elders
- g. It shall exercise disciplinary powers over the congregation and office-bearers of the local church.
- h. It shall arrange for instructions for converts and arrange for reception into the church.
- i. It shall arrange evangelization for the area appointed to it.
- j. It shall implement synodical and parish decisions.
- k. It shall have power to raise funds in such manner as the council shall deem fit, provided that the council shall not have power to incur liability on behalf of the church.
- l. It shall have power to recommend to the parish council that a new local church be created from its jurisdiction.
- m. It shall employ, set the terms of service, discipline and terminate the service of her employees as it shall deem necessary.
- n. It shall have power to recommend to the parish council that disciplinary action should be taken against the Minister or evangelist.
- o. It shall have the power to establish a new preaching post.
- p. It shall establish such committees as it shall deem fit.

**4.6 Meeting**

- i. The local church council and its committees shall meet not less than once every two months and shall conduct its accordance with standing orders made by the synod.
- ii. Members shall be notified and the circulated at least 7 days in advance of the meeting.

**4.7 Committees of the local church**

- i. The local church council is charged with the responsibility of developing its local church through various committees to be appointed by the local church council as the need arises.
- ii. Each committee shall have seven voting members. Any staff employed by the local church to assist in the task of a special committee shall be a coopted, non-voting member of that committee.

## **Article V The parish**

The formation of parishes and fixing of their boundaries shall decide by the synod council, after consultation with concerned parishes.

### **5.1 Membership of the parish council**

- i. A parish council shall consist of:
  - a. A minister of the parish
  - b. Equal numbers of representative elders, deacons and evangelists from local churches selected under regulations made by the synod. The synod shall have right to sanction departure from the rule of equality of numbers when it shall see good reason to do so.
- ii. The following persons shall be coopted members of the parish council , but shall not be entitled to vote:
  - a. Heads of departments in the parish
  - b. Persons given special assignments by the parish council.

### **5.2 Retirement of a minister of the Word**

- i. A minister shall have the option to retire upon attaining the age of 55 years or above provided that any minister opting to retire shall give six (6) months-notice in writing to the synod of his intention to retire.
- ii. A minister shall retire upon attaining the age of 60. The synod may at the request of the retiring minister or need arise, extend his services for a maximum period of five years on contract basis.
- iii. In any case where the synod has extended a ministers services beyond the age 60 years, the minister shall be posted in accordance<sup>4</sup> with any agreement reached between him and the synod.
- iv. After attaining the age of 55 every minister in active service shall be informed on yearly basis of the remaining time of service until he attains retirement age.
- v. The synod shall not transfer any minister who has attained the age of 55 years without the concurrence of such minister.
- vi. A retired minister, working on a contract, shall be given 2 additional increments on top of his salary. He shall not be entitled to pension, provident fund and NSSF.
- vii. A retired minister shall be allowed to perform any ministerial duties if called upon to do so.

### **5.3 Retirement of an evangelist**

- i. An evangelist or church worker shall have the option to retire upon attaining the age of 55 or above provided that any evangelist or church workers opting to retire shall give six months' notice in writing to the synod of his intention to retire.
- ii. An evangelist or church worker shall retire upon attaining the age of 60. The synod may at the request of the retiring evangelist or church worker, or if need arises, extend his services beyond the age of 60. The synod may at the request of the retiring evangelist or church worker, or if need arises, extend his services for a maximum period of five years on contract basis.
- iii. In any case where the synod has extended an evangelist or church worker shall be posted in accordance with any agreement reached between him or her and the synod.
- iv. After attaining the age of 55, every evangelist and church worker in active service shall be informed on a yearly basis of the remaining time of service until he or she attains retirement age.
- v. A retired evangelist or church worker working on a contract shall be given 2 additional increments on top of his or her present salary. He or she shall not be entitled to pension, provident and NSSF.

## **I. Parish Officials**

### **i. Chairman**

The members of the parish council shall elect the chairman of the parish council. Only the following persons shall be eligible to be elected as chairman of the parish council:

- a. The minister of the parish
- b. An ordained elder of the parish

The chairman shall preside over the meetings of the parish council.

### **ii. Secretary**

The members of the parish council shall elect the secretary of the parish council. Only the following shall be eligible to be elected as secretary of the parish council:

- a. An ordained elder
- b. An evangelist

The secretary shall take the minutes of the meeting of the parish council and shall be responsible for issuing notices for the meetings and circulating the agenda and carry out other secretarial duties

### **iii. Treasurer**

The members of the parish council shall elect the treasurer of the parish from among its ordained elders or ordained deacons. The treasurer shall be responsible for financial matters of the parish,

### **iv. The Minister**

The parish minister shall, besides the main tasks as spelled out in ARTICLE 111 (3.4.2) be in charge of the running of the parish holistically, in cooperation with the parish council.

## **II. Power and duties of the Parish**

A parish council shall be responsible for running all the affairs of the parish. It shall have power create a new local church. A parish council exercises supervision over the minister, the evangelist, other parish employees, local churches, churches advisers and the congregations within its bounds. It permits students to preach in their local churches.

It ordains ministers and admits them to their charges in accordance with regulations of the synod and gives effect to all laws passed by the synod.

## **III. Meetings**

A parish council shall meet at least quarterly and shall conduct its business under such standing orders as the synod may approve.

## **IV. Committees**

The parish council is charged with the responsibility of developing its parish through various committees to be appointed by the parish council as the need arises.

## **Article VI Presbytery**

### **6.1 Formation of Presbytery**

The synod shall group a member of parishes to form a presbytery.

### **6.2 Presbytery Council**

Each presbytery shall have a presbytery council.

### **6.3 Powers and Duties of the Presbytery Council**

The presbytery council shall;

- a. Perform such duties as shall be delegated by the synod
- b. Perform such duties as shall be requested by any of the parishes under it, provided that the presbytery council agrees to the performance of such duties and provided further that the performance of such duties is in conformity with this constitution.
- c. Make decisions on matters relating the presbytery
- d. Supervise the work of the parishes under it.

### **6.4. Membership of the Presbytery Council**

#### **6.4.1 Composition of the Presbytery Council**



- i. Membership shall be confined to ministers, elders, deacons and evangelists. The composition of the presbytery council shall comprise of representatives from each parish council as follows;
  - a. The minister
  - b. Two elders
  - c. One deacon
  - d. One evangelist
- ii. The following persons shall be coopted members of the presbytery council ,but shall not be entitled to vote;
  - a. Heads of departments
  - b. Persons given special assignments by the presbytery council.

## **Article VI Presbyteries**

### **6.1 Formation of Presbytery**

The synod shall group a number of parishes to form a presbytery.

### **6.2 Presbytery Council**

Each presbytery shall have a presbytery council

### **6.3 Powers and Duties of the Presbytery Council**

The presbytery council shall:

- a. Perform such duties as shall be delegated by the synod
- b. Perform such duties as shall be required by any of the parishes under it, provided that the presbytery council agrees to the performance of such duties and provided further that the performance of such duties is in conformity with this constitution.
- c. Make decisions on matters relating to the presbytery
- d. Supervise the work of the parishes under it.

### **6.4 Membership of the Presbytery Council**

#### **6.4.1 Composition of the Presbytery Council**

- i. Membership shall be confined to ministers, elders, deacons and evangelists. The composition of the presbytery council shall comprise of representatives from each parish council as follows:-
  - a. The minister
  - b. Two elders
  - c. One deacon
  - d. One evangelist
- ii. The following persons shall be coopted members of the presbytery council, but shall not be entitled

to vote:

- a. Heads of department in the presbytery
- b. Persons given special assignments by the presbytery council.

#### **6.4.2 Executive Committee**

Each presbytery council shall have an executive committee whose functions shall be to implement decisions of the presbytery council.

The executive committee shall comprise of:

- a. The moderate of the presbytery council who shall also be the chairman of the executive committee
- b. The secretary of the presbytery council who shall also be the secretary of the executive committee.
- c. The treasurer of the presbytery council who shall also be the treasurer of the executive committee
- d. Two ordained elders to represent all elder from the presbytery.
- e. One ordained deacon to represent all deacons in the presbytery
- f. One evangelist to represent all evangelists in the presbytery.

#### **6.4.3 Officials**

##### **i. The Moderator**

The members of the presbytery council shall elect a moderator from among the ministers who are members of the presbytery council.

The moderator shall preside over the meetings of the presbytery council

##### **ii. The Secretary**

The members of the presbytery council shall elect a secretary from among the ministers who are members of the presbytery council. The secretary shall take the minutes of the meetings of the presbytery council and shall be responsible for issuing notices for the meetings and circulating the agenda and carry out other secretarial duties.

##### **iii. The Treasurer**

The members of the presbytery council shall elect a treasurer from among its elders or deacons. The treasurer shall be responsible for financial matters of the presbytery.

##### **iv. Deputies**

The members of the presbytery council shall elect the deputy moderator and secretary from among the ministers who are members of the presbytery council.

#### **6.5. Meeting of the Presbytery Council**

The presbytery council shall meet not less than twice in any calendar year. Each meeting shall be convened by the presbytery secretary as directed by the chairman or ten members of the presbytery council, giving a notice of at least 14 days. If the presbytery secretary fails to circulate notices of the convening of a meeting within 7 days of the direction by the chairman or by ten members of the council, the deputy secretary shall have powers to convene a meeting. Meetings shall be held in rotation in the parishes of the presbytery.

## **6.6 Autonomy**

Each presbytery shall be autonomous and shall have decision making powers which shall be subject to or limited by the decision of the synod

## **6.7 Raising funds and borrowing**

The presbytery council shall have powers to raise or solicit for or borrow money or take such credit or credit facilities as the council shall decide subject to the following:-

- i. The resolution to solicit for or borrow money or take such credit or credit facilities must be supported by at least two third of the members of the council and must be approved by the synod's executive committee prior to borrowing or taking credit facilities.
- ii. In the event that a presbytery council meeting cannot be convened within a reasonable time, the presbytery executive committee is empowered to solicit for or borrow money or take such resolution to be supported by executive committee shall resolve. Such resolution to be supported by executive committee provided that a meeting of the presbytery council is convened within 14 days to ratify the resolution of the executive committee. Upon a resolution being made by the council to take credit or credit facilities any two of the following are empowered to effect such resolution:
  - a. Moderator
  - b. Secretary
  - c. Treasurer

## **Articles VII The Synod**

### **7.1 The Functions of the Synod**

The functions of the synod which is the supreme court and whose decision is final shall be:-

- i. To draw the policy of the church in line with article ii of this constitution
- ii. To appoint, discipline and dismiss pastors according to such rules as the synod may set from time to time.
- iii. To set terms of service of employees of the RCEA
- iv. To elect the moderator, general secretary, honorary treasurer, deputy moderator and deputy general secretary.

- v. To elect the members of the executive committee
- vi. To remove at any time any officials elected by the synod on disciplinary grounds.
- vii. To review the appointment and termination of service of heads of departments
- viii. To receive, discuss and if satisfied adopt the annual reports of the moderator, general secretary and honorary treasurer. The report of the honorary treasurer will include the audited accounts for the previous fiscal year.
- ix. To install special committee to deal with specific issues as they arise. Such committees to deal with specific issues as they arise. Such committees shall operate under the executive committee.
- x. To discuss and if satisfied approve a proposal of the executive committee to become a member of any national or international organization.
- xi. To perform such other functions as are set out in this constitution.

## **7.2 Membership of the Synod**

A synod shall comprise of:

- i. The office-bearers of the synod
- ii. Representatives from the presbyteries as elected with the following composition from each presbytery;
  - a. The moderator
  - b. The secretary
  - c. Two elders
  - d. One deacon
  - e. One evangelist
- iii. Non-voting guests and experts invited by the synod office-bearers

## **7.3 Officials of the Synod**

### **The Moderator**

- i. The members of the synod shall elect a moderator from among the ministers who are members of the synod.
- ii. The moderator shall have both a deliberative and casting vote.
- iii. The moderator shall be the official spokesman of the church, church leader of ceremonies, legal representative of the church, chairman of synod and executive committee.

### **The General Secretary**

- i. The members of the synod shall elect an executive general secretary from among the ministers who are members of the synod.

- ii. The general secretary shall be the chief executive officer of the church.
- iii. The general secretary shall have a deliberative but not a casting vote in the synod and in the executive committee.
- iv. He shall be the leader of the day office business and of church programs.
- v. He shall be secretary to the synod and executive committee.

### **The Deputy Moderator**

- i. The members of the synod shall elect a deputy moderator from among the ministers who are members of the synod.
- ii. The deputy moderator shall have a deliberative vote.
- iii. The deputy moderator shall resume the duties of the moderator in his absence.

### **The Deputy General Secretary**

- i. The members of the synod shall elect a deputy general secretary from among the ministers who are members of the synod.
- ii. The deputy general secretary shall deputize for the general secretary and shall perform such duties as the general secretary shall delegate.
- iii. The deputy general secretary shall act in the position of general secretary during the absence of the general secretary.
- iv. The deputy general secretary shall have a deliberative vote in the synod and the executive committee.

### **The Honorary Treasurer**

- i. The members of the synod shall elect the honorary treasurer from among the candidates proposed by the executive committee.
- ii. The executive committee shall propose not less than two candidates for election as a honorary treasurer.
- iii. No person shall be a candidate unless he is:
  - a) A qualified accountant and
  - b) A member of the RCEA
- iv. The honorary treasurer shall be
  - a) Accountable to the executive committee and the synod in financial matters
  - b) Advisor to the executive and synod council on
    - I. Financial position of the RCEA

- II. Raising of loans, overdrafts, banking facilities, aid and grants of whatever nature.
- III. Placement of insurances for the RCEA
- IV. Supervision of accounting record

#### **7.4 The executive committee**

- a) The executive committee shall be composed of 14 voting members, elected by a full synod
- b) The moderator, deputy moderator, general secretary and deputy general secretary and honorary treasurer shall be official members of the executive committee with deliberative votes, but the moderator shall in addition have a casting vote.

The composition of the executive committee shall be as follows:

- i. pastors, including the moderator, the deputy moderator, general secretary and the deputy general secretary,
- ii. elders
- iii. Deacons
- iv. Evangelists
- v. Honorary treasurer
- c) Departmental secretaries shall be coopted non-voting members as need arises
- d) The moderator of the synod shall be the moderator of the executive committee
- e) The general secretary of the synod shall be all moderator of the executive committee

The functions of the executive of the executive committee shall be to:

- a) Help the synod council to propagate the Gospel within the fundamental principles of the church as laid down in the constitution, article 11.
- b) Serve the entire church in assisting the needy church members, stimulating and training councils, members committees and employees of the RCEA
- c) Implement resolutions of the synod
- d) Appoint qualified, experienced and professional department secretaries to relevant jobs they have been trained for, subject to synod review and
- e) Demote or terminate or take other necessary disciplinary actions against departmental secretaries subject to review and approval by the synod.
- f) Assist the departmental committee to appoint qualified experienced and professional RCEA personnel to relevant jobs.
- g) Appoint certain committee.

## **7.5 The Committees**

- i. The Executive Committee shall establish departments and appoint committees to be in charge of them as need arises.
- ii. The Committees shall be composed of 7 voting members.
- iii. In the first meeting, the Committee shall elect the chairman and treasurer from among the Members.
- iv. The head of the department shall be the secretary of the committee, unless otherwise provided.
- v. The head of the department shall be a well-qualified and professionally trained person in that particular department.
- vi. The treasurer shall at least have a basic understanding of accounts.
- vii. The Committees shall have power to discipline or terminate the service of its employees, provided that such discipline and termination of service shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee.
- viii. Demotion, termination of service and other disciplinary action of the heads of departments shall be carried out by the Executive Committee, provided that such discipline and termination of service shall be reviewed and approved by the synod.
- ix. The Treasurer shall control the finance of the department and advice the Committee on the financial position of the department.

## **Article VIII Meetings**

### **i. Two Weeks Notice**

For a meeting convened, a written notice of not less than two weeks shall be issued by the secretary of the Council or Committee that is to meet.

### **ii. Accompanied By Agenda**

The notice convening any meeting shall be accompanied by the agenda.

### **iii. Quorum**

- a. Unless otherwise provided, the quorum for any meeting where the number of voting Members is even shall be one more than a half of the voting members.
- b. Unless otherwise provided, the quorum for any meeting where the number of voting is odd, shall be one half of the aggregate of the voting members added by one.
- c. An apology for not attending shall not constitute attendance at any meeting.

### **iv. Decisions**

Unless otherwise provided, the decisions at any meeting shall be by simple majority of voting members.

**v. Ex Officio Members**

The moderator and the general secretary shall be ex-officio members of every committee and council, unless otherwise provided.

**Article IX Elections**

**i. Office for Four Years**

Except for persons elected at by-elections every elected person shall hold an office for 4 years.

**ii. Re-Election**

Every elected official is eligible for re-election provided that he or she has not served for a continuous period of 8 years in the same capacity.

**iii. By Elections**

Whenever a vacancy arises in any office, a by election shall be held after three months but within six months of such office falling vacant.

**iv. Each Four Years From 1995**

The next elections shall be held in 1995 and subsequent elections shall be held after each period of 4 years.

**v. Time Table**

The Synod shall give a time table to be followed in the election process in the electing year.

Such time table shall provide for the holding of the elections in the following order:

- a. Local Churches
- b. Parishes
- c. Presbyteries
- d. Synod office-bearers and Executive Committee

**vi. Secret Ballot**

All elections of persons shall be done by secret ballot.

**vii. Number of Votes Required**

To be elected the person must have gathered at least half plus one of the valid votes; abstentions shall not be counted as valid votes.

When no absolute majority has been reached in favor of one person, a new election must be held between the two persons who have received the most votes in the previous election.

**viii. Elections on the Agenda**

Elections shall only be held when they are put on the agenda and the agenda has circulated according to the valid procedure of each council or committee.

**ix. Supervision**



All eligible voters shall before the election start appoint at least three persons from among their midst who will supervise the election, count the votes and announce the result of the counting immediately after the election.

## **Article X Discipline and Appeals**

### **10.1 Members**

- i. A member who professes unchristian teaching or lives an unchristian life, and who after repeated and loving counsel refuse to abandon his errors and wickedness, and who fail to respond to the local church council's admonition, shall be disciplined by the local church council under the guidance of the parish pastor. The measure of discipline shall be withholding the sacraments and finally ex-communication.
- ii. A member who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the parish council for final judgement.
- iii. Ex-communicated members or members who are excluded from the sacraments and who show repentance and demonstrate genuine reform shall be re-installed as members with full rights.

### **10.2 Elders and Deacons**

- i. An elder or a deacon, who has been put under discipline as per Article 10.1., shall be removed from office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures.
- ii. An elder or deacon, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the parish council in consultation with the local church council.
- iii. An elder or deacon who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the presbytery council for final judgement.

### **10.3 Evangelists**

- 12 An evangelist, who has been put under discipline as per Article 10.1., shall be removed from office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures.
- 13 An evangelist, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the parish council in consultation with the department dealing with the evangelists' duties.
- 14 An evangelist who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action shall appeal to the Presbytery Council for final judgement.

### **10.4 Ministers**

- 15 Any disciplinary action as mentioned in article 8.1. Regarding a minister shall not be taken by the local church council but by the parish council in consultation with the Presbytery Council. Any disciplinary action shall result in his removal from Office as long as he is under those disciplinary measures.
- 16 A minister, who fails to perform his church duties, shall be removed from office by the Presbytery Council in consultation with the Synod Executive Committee. A minister, who is not satisfied with the

disciplinary action, shall appeal to the synod for final judgement.

- 17 Any minister, who is removed from the office, shall hand over his ministerial garments to the Executive Committee of the Synod and his ministerial role shall cease.

#### **10.5 Departmental Heads**

- i. Article 10.1 shall govern discipline and the procedure thereof for the departmental heads. disciplinary action may include termination of service. a departmental head, who fails to perform his church duties, shall have his services terminated by the Synod Executive Committees.
- ii. A departmental head, who is not satisfied with the disciplinary actions or his termination, shall appeal to the synod for final judgement.

#### **10.6 Other Church Employees**

- i. Employees who are members of the church shall be governed by the regulations of discipline as laid down in Article 10.1.
- ii. Disciplinary action may include termination of services.
- iii. Employees, who are not members of the church, shall be under the employment regulations and standing orders of the church regarding employees. Violation of these regulations shall be handled by the Committee under which the employee is working and may lead to disciplinary action and finally termination of services. An employee who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action or termination of services may appeal to the Synod's Executive Committee for final judgement.

#### **10.7 Missionaries**

- 11 Any disciplinary action as mentioned in article 10.1. Regarding a missionary shall not be taken by the local church council, but by the office-bearers in consultation with the Synod's Executive Committee.
- 12 Any disciplinary action shall result in the termination of his services, as long as he is under those disciplinary measures.
- 13 A missionary, who fails to perform his church duties, shall have his services terminated by the Synods Executive Committee after consulting the supporting missionary organization.
- 14 A missionary, who is not satisfied with the disciplinary actions or termination, shall appeal to the synod for final judgement.

#### **10.8 Office-bearers**

- i. Any disciplinary action as mentioned in article 8.1. Regarding an office bearer shall not be taken by the local church council, but by the Synod's Executive Committee.
- ii. Any disciplinary action shall result in the termination of his services, as long as he is under those disciplinary measures.
- iii. An office bearer, who fails to perform his church duties, shall have his services terminated by the synod.

## **Article XI**

### **Finances**

#### **i. Approval of Budgets**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall review all the departmental and programmes budgets and forward them with its considerations to the Executive Committee for final approval.

#### **ii. Drafting Budgets**

The Finance and Planning Committee through the general secretariat shall participate in drafting the budgets of the parishes and presbyteries, while educating church members at all levels how to exploit the resources in order to finance the running of the local churches, parishes, presbyteries and the synod.

#### **iii. Advice**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall advise the church how to raise money for church activities.

#### **iv. Policies**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall make finance policies for the church to be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee.

#### **v. Review of Salaries**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall from time to time review salaries of church employees in line with current standard of living, academic qualifications, experience, professional qualifications and responsibilities.

#### **vi. Planning**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall make plans in order that there are enough resources to pay salaries of all church employees and to run church activities throughout the year.

#### **vii. Schemes**

The Finance and Planning Committee, shall establish enough schemes for church employees, and keep them well informed of the progress of these schemes.

#### **viii. Control**

The Finance and Planning Committee shall control finance and advise Executive Committee about the position of finance of the church.

## **Article XII**

### **Properties**

#### **i. Property Included**

The property of the church shall include all the funds, raised by the church, all the land and immovable properties in the legal possession of the church or subsequently acquired by collection, gift or other lawful means by any local church, parish, presbytery, synod or any other court or committee of the church.

**ii. Land and Immovable Properties**

All the land and immovable properties of the church acquired before or after this Constitution shall be inaugurated, shall be vested in trustees to be appointed under the land (perpetual succession) ordinance.

**iii. Nomination of Trustees**

The right of nomination of trustees registered as in Article X (ii) above, including the right to dismiss trustees and to nominate trustees to fill any vacancy through death, retirement or removal of any such trustees from the office shall be vested in the synod.

**iv. Number of Trustees**

The number of such trustees shall be four, on the understanding that one should be a pastor; two should be elders and one a deacon.

**v. Application For a Certificate of Incorporation**

Such trustees shall on appointment forthwith apply for a certificate of incorporation under the land (Perpetual Succession) ordinance, Cap. 163.

**vi. Permission by Executive Committee**

The trustees shall only utilize, sell or mortgage any land or immovable property if they are granted permission by the Executive Committee.

**Article XIII**

**Employees of the Church**

- i. The moderator, the general secretary and the pastors (ministers) shall be employees of the synod.
- ii. Secretaries of the departments and programs (departmental heads) shall be employees of the executive committee.
- iii. All other staff shall be employees of the departmental committee under which the member of staff shall be employed.

**Article XIV**

**Acts of the Synod**

- i. What the synod shall pass shall be called the "Acts of the Synod of the Year", being the year in which the acts were passed.
- ii. The acts of the synod shall be compiled into a book or booklet which shall be a future reference of the church and for research purposes as well as for sale.

## **Article XV**

### **Alterations**

- i. Alterations in the Constitution shall be made after the parishes and Presbyteries have been consulted and when a full synod has approved it, with 2/3 majority.
- ii. Article I and II are unchangeable unless the Bible supports the change and full synod shall unanimously approve the alteration.

## ADDENDUM 6

### DECLARATION OF FAITH ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION

**A Declaration of Faith:** God, through the Holy Spirit, calls both women and men to participate fully in all the ministries of the church. This declaration testifies to our belief that women and men were created equally in the image of God and that they therefore should be treated with equal respect and dignity. It testifies to the profound unity of all who have been baptized. It testifies to our experience over centuries that God has been calling both women and men to ministries of spiritual leadership and granting them the gifts and graces to carry out those roles. In some of the cultural contexts in which our churches live today, this declaration goes against the prevailing ethos. Thus faithful Christians are often called to be countercultural. Theological integrity and justice require that the churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in solidarity courageously declare their commitment to assure that both women and men have equal standing to reflect their common incorporation into the body of Christ in baptism and service.

The churches of the WCRC now pledge that our common practice will be to welcome into ordained ministry women who experience that call and who demonstrate the gifts necessary for leadership and service in church ministries. Their placement and any compensation will be determined on the same basis as for men.

#### The Context

*Why do we make this declaration now?*

The women's pre-assembly at the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA (2010), through its commitment to full partnership between women and men, affirmed both the need to work towards a binding commitment of the Communion to the ordination of women, and also the need to achieve equal representation of women and men on the Executive Committee.

The Uniting General Council then affirmed women's ordination as central to the understanding of communion, stating: "True unity cannot be realized in a context where the call of God to women to actualize their gifts in the ministry of Word and Sacrament is not recognized."<sup>30</sup> Among the recommendations approved by the WCRC General Council was a commitment to "...promote the ordination of women and work toward a time when the ordination of women will be binding on communion."<sup>31</sup> To achieve these

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<sup>30</sup> Record of Proceedings, United General Council 2010, Grand Rapids, USA, p.160

<sup>31</sup> *Idem*

mandates, we believe we have to work toward a declaration of faith, and this document attempts to address this issue.

The brutality of the treatment of women across the world today reflects a long-standing view in some cultures that women are by nature inferior to men, born to serve and obey men, that the girl is less valuable than the boy, that women deserve neither respect nor dignity. We see that the girl and the mother are often the last in the family to be fed and are the least educated, so that their life possibilities are limited. We see mass rape of girls and women used as a weapon of war with appalling consequences. We see women forbidden to leave their homes and take part in the wider life of society. Even in highly developed nations, women are paid less for the same work than men, sometimes have restricted access to healthcare and are rarely fully represented in national governing structures.

Churches rightly protest assaults on the human rights of women, but their moral authority is compromised when they demonstrate by their institutional life that they, too, believe in the inferiority of women and their incapacity to serve as ordained church leaders. The churches' refusal to ordain women is experienced by them as painful oppression, robbing them of their proper dignity. Even when the women have been ordained, they often face discrimination and marginalization.

The churches of the Reformed family today, spanning the globe and rooted in diverse cultures, have the opportunity and the obligation to witness before the world that women and men alike are created in the image of God, deserve equal respect and dignity, and can find in the institutional life of the church an affirmation of those beliefs. The ordination of women is a powerful witness to the equality of women and men in the eyes of God. It is also an expression of gratitude for women's rich gifts of leadership that invigorate the life of the churches.

### **The Biblical Foundation: Creation and New Creation**

The Bible, foundation of Reformed belief and practice, has been used to support both the approval and disapproval of women's ordination. The Bible in fact both reflects and challenges the patriarchal world in which it was written, prompting us to define a hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the Bible. Reformed Christians generally read the Bible in the light of the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, aided by critical biblical scholarship and rigorous reflection and discernment in the community of faith, upheld by prayer. This approach to discerning God's will avoids simply studying and citing isolated texts. God's grace for the whole of creation leads us to approach the Bible embracing mercy, justice and liberation in the face of the fallen world and structures of oppression. Galatians 5:1: "For freedom, Christ has set us free." There

has been a fundamental shift in critical scholarship that has supported a renewed understanding of the equality proclaimed in the Gospel. This has guided us in our firm conviction that the ordination of women is a fully biblical imperative. We will sketch the basis of that belief, focusing on two texts: Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28.

**Creation:** Genesis 1:27-28: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’”(NRSV).

Fundamental to our understanding of the proper role of women is this verse, announcing at the very beginning of the biblical narrative that women and men together are created in God's image. This is a statement of equality and solidarity. Neither here nor in the following verse's charge to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth is there any suggestion of division of labor by sex or of women's subordination. Opponents of women's ordination often point to Genesis 2:18: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (NRSV). The term “helper” has been seen as a sign of subordination. In the Hebrew, however, the word carries the opposite connotation. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures the same word often describes God creating and saving Israel, a source of strong support. The recognition by the man in Genesis 2:23 that the woman is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” is again a declaration of mutuality and solidarity.

We reject theologies that teach that women are by their biological nature inferior to men, or that women reflect the image of God less fully than men, or that women's proper role is limited to procreation and the domestic realm, excluding them from taking public responsibility within creation. God's intention at creation is equality and solidarity between women and men in harmony with all creation. After the fall both the woman and the man experience distortion of those relationships. In Genesis 3:16, the woman hears that she should be subject to her husband as punishment for sin, and the man is punished by the cursing of the land and his labor. The biblical narrative continues then to portray a patriarchal society. Jewish women in the Hebrew Scriptures rarely appear in official leadership. We do read of Queen Esther and of Deborah the judge, and of prophets like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Noadiah. A rich succession of able women nonetheless pervades the biblical text, such as the clever Hebrew midwives in Egypt, and the beloved Ruth with her own book.

**New Creation:** Galatians 3:27-28: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and



female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (NRSV). The ministry of Jesus portrays many challenges to the oppressive practices of society, where public contact between women and men was strictly regulated. For example, he intervened against stoning of the woman taken in adultery. He allowed the haemorrhaging woman to touch his garment, and he healed her. He was surrounded by both women and men as disciples and empowered them in life and ministry. He taught about the reign of God that was already beginning among them and that would upend the current way of life. His intimate friendships with Mary and Martha permitted them to engage in theological conversation. He accepted the Syro-Phoenician woman’s challenge to his understanding of his mission, and yielded to her plea to heal her daughter. He crossed the conventional boundary by engaging in a conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, talking with her at length, and enabling her to return to her community and minister by sharing the good news. His interaction with Mary Magdalene transformed her into a faithful disciple who witnessed the resurrection. After his resurrection, he appeared to women disciples and sent them to tell the others that he lived. These examples demonstrate the countercultural nature of Jesus’s ministry and indicate the value and significance Jesus gave to women in ministry.

In the band of disciples that gathered in Jerusalem to pray after Jesus’ resurrection were “certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:14, NRSV). All were present at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Peter, addressing the people of Jerusalem to explain how the resurrected Jesus was the Messiah, took his text from the prophet Joel: “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18, NRSV; cf. Joel 2:28-9). In this new era of the reign of God where the Spirit has been poured out, women will have a far more egalitarian role than before. So it should not surprise us to read in the book of Acts about women prophets like the daughters of Philip, about Priscilla with her husband teaching the preacher Apollos and accompanying Paul on his journey, risking their necks for him, he says, and about the women hosting house churches. Paul speaks warmly and gratefully about his women colleagues in ministry: among them Junia the apostle; Phoebe, the minister (or deacon) of the church of Cenchreae; Priscilla and Mary. Some had been jailed with him (Romans 16:1-16). The widows who cared for the poor (I Timothy 5) were understood by John Calvin to be part of the office of deacon. There are many records in the early centuries of the ordained women deacons.

It is in the context of the new creation, where the Holy Spirit calls those least expected to give leadership, that we read Galatians 3:27-28 as part of an ancient baptismal rite. All who are called into faith and baptized into Christ’s body have become one family where human barriers accepted by society must fall. We know

from the book of Acts how difficult a struggle it was for those early Christians to accept that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, previously sanctioned by religion, had been broken by the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet a clear decision was made that Gentiles given the gift of faith must be accepted into the community without circumcision. Some of our churches were still struggling in the late nineteenth century with the implications of that phrase “no longer slave or free,” but the teaching of the Bible eventually led them to decide that slavery was morally wrong and that Christians could not be slave-holders. It took another century for some of our churches to understand that the racial barrier has also been broken by the Holy Spirit, and there can be no racially segregated churches. Our Reformed family at the WARC General Council in Ottawa in 1982 declared that apartheid (which had extended to church structures) is sin, and justifying it morally and theologically is “a travesty of the Gospel, and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.” We now are at a moment in history when our churches must declare that among the baptized there is no longer male and female. This means that men can no longer be exclusively privileged with church leadership.

### **Experience in the Life of the Church**

Women lost their equality with men in the Church in the early centuries as the house churches moved out into public spaces, and the Church became institutionalized. Theologians living in the dualistic thought of the Hellenistic world lost the Hebraic belief in the goodness of creation. They adopted from Greek philosophy and Roman law unbiblical views of the subordination and inferiority of women. Thomas Aquinas, for example, adopted Aristotle's view of women as defective males, damaged in the process of gestation. Apart from some women deacons in the East who marched with the clergy in the early middle ages, the only official role available to medieval women in the church was that of a nun; but some nuns did exercise remarkable influence. Christine de Pisan, a lay woman, set off around 1400 a centuries-long literary debate about the nature of women in which she challenged the theologians' assumptions. Marie Dentiere in the early years of the Reformation in Geneva took up this debate, insisting that the liberating Gospel called on women to speak and write, and she did. She asked, “Are there two gospels, one for men, another for women?” Women writing in this tradition pointed out the varied roles of women in the New Testament, reading the Bible very differently than either Catholic or Protestant male theologians. Attempts were made to silence these women.

Luther's Reformation, honored in 2017 at its 500th anniversary, gave to all of Protestantism the concept of the priesthood of all believers, the right of all the baptized to stand before God to pray for one another and to teach one another divine things, declaring God's gracious love and forgiveness to one another. This priesthood is distinct, however, from public ministry on behalf of a congregation. Both Lutheran and

Reformed theologians repudiated the Aristotelian view of women, gave greater dignity to marriage, and even encouraged women to join congregational singing in public worship. Nonetheless they did not understand the priesthood of all believers to undermine the tradition of exclusively male clergy carrying out public ministry. After five hundred years, it is time for us to declare that a full understanding of the priesthood of all believers calls for equality of women and men in public ministry as well.

The ordination of women already has a long-standing tradition in the Reformed family. The Congregationalists have been ordaining women ministers since 1853, when Antoinette Brown became the first woman Congregational minister. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church ordained Louisa Woosley in 1889, but no other Presbyterians followed for many years. There have been women deacons since at least the late 19th century, and women elders since at least the 1930's. Since the middle of the twentieth century, however, increasing numbers of Reformed churches around the world have been regularly ordaining women as ministers, elders and deacons, and today most do so. Therefore, we have abundant evidence that women in diverse cultures on every continent can become fine theologians and have fruitful ministries. Our churches have confirmed through their experience with faithful women leaders that God is indeed calling women to ordained ministries and through them strengthening the churches.

Through history and in the present there is a disturbing recurrent experience in churches that do not ordain women. It is the disjunction of ordination from the practice of functions ordinarily related to ordained ministry. In all our churches women carry out tasks that churches with Presbyterian governance typically assign to elders and deacons; yet where ordination of women is refused, women carry out those tasks without the authority of office, without the ability to participate in the decision-making of governing bodies, and without the collegial support of ordained colleagues. In unusual situations of flux and transition, where pastors are scarce, where men are at war, on the mission field and in remote locations, able women are also called to exercise pastoral functions. They organize churches, lead public worship, preach, lead and teach in theological schools, and provide pastoral care. Yet even if they are theologically educated, they, too, lack the authority of office, participation in governing bodies, and collegial support, and they cannot offer the sacraments. They are also paid much less than pastors. The Reformed tradition has closely tied ordination to the functions of ministry. If women are trusted to carry out the functions of ministry, they should be ordained. This is a matter of faith and of justice.

When surveyed, most of our member churches that do not ordain women do not cite theology as the reason but culture. Some live in contexts where secular society does not accept women's leadership. Some are minorities in predominantly Roman Catholic or Orthodox countries and feel ecumenical pressure to refrain

from actions their neighbors find offensive. These cultural pressures are significant and sometimes life threatening. The Church throughout its history has faced such challenge in its struggle to make a faithful witness in the world. The WCRC needs to accompany these churches in solidarity. In Christ we are called to be a new creation, transcending the oppressive aspects of culture.

Since the Seoul General Council of WARC in 1989, general councils have been calling on the churches to re-examine their practice if they do not ordain women and developing ways to assist them in this process. Those churches that do ordain women have been asked to study whether women ministers have equal access to placement opportunities and equal pay for equal work. The survey made by the office of partnership between women and men in 2009 (WARC) presented not very precise information since all churches did not respond properly. It showed that at least 42 churches do not ordain women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Those churches are distributed as follow: Europe 7, Africa 18, Middle East 3, Latin America 5, Asia 9. From 2010 until now we have not been able to elicit a clear response from the member churches, though the regional councils that allow us to update these figures point out that those numbers are still valid. We now seek to live out our commitment to communion and justice as we make this common Declaration of Faith, praying: Living God, renew and transform us!

## ADDENDUM 7

### MAP OF KENYA SHOWING COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

